

WORK-FAMILY BALANCE AMONG MOTHERS WHO ARE MID-CAREER
STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS
AT INSTITUTIONS RECOGNIZED FOR WORK-LIFE POLICIES

BY

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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WORK-FAMILY BALANCE AMONG MOTHERS WHO ARE MID-CAREER STUDENT
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POLICIES

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Date approved: April 21, 2016

Work-Family Balance among Mothers who are Mid-Career Student Affairs Administrators at Institutions Recognized for Work-Life Policies

The purpose of this study was to understand the work-family balance experiences of mothers, in mid-career student affairs administrator roles, at institutions known for work-life supports. This study asked: how do these women describe their experiences managing work and family roles? What knowledge of existing work-life policies do these administrators have? How do these existing policies influence the perception of workplace culture and norms? How does perceived work-family balance influence the intended career trajectory, or desire for professional advancement, of those women? Through a qualitative research design, I explored the work-family experiences of 15 administrators through participant interviews. Several major findings were uncovered. First, the majority of these administrators saw themselves as the primary caregiver to their child. Second, work-life supports, such as flexible leave time and university run childcare, contributed to the women's ability to manage the student affairs role with motherhood. Third, feeling supervisor support and flexibility to attend to personal responsibilities, as the women saw fit, contributed to workplace loyalty. Conversely, the absence of support and flexibility fueled a desire to seek employment outside of the institution. Fourth, when the participants' perceived inequities existed related to who had access to flexible work arrangements, the feelings they expressed about their workplace were more negative, even when their own personal experience was positive. Fifth, women do not understand FMLA policies, which was specifically apparent in relationship to maternity leave. Finally, some policies have good intentions, but no actual impact. The best example was providing tuition remission for higher education, but only for bachelor's degrees, a credential that was a job requirement when the administrators were hired into their existing roles.

Acknowledgments

The completion of this work occurred alongside a marriage, the birth of two children, and employment at two different institutional types, in two different states. It not only took endurance on the part of myself, but the support of my partner in life, who willingly gave me any time I needed to research or write, while being an amazing father to our children. Learning about the experiences of other mothers who were likewise balancing family, work, educational aspirations, and personal goals was an incredibly rewarding experience. I am forever grateful for the women who participated in this study and appreciate the ways in which they inspired me to embrace duality when it comes to wearing my mom and administrator hats.

Lastly, I want to thank my entire committee for their feedback and flexibility, particularly after I was no longer on the University of Kansas campus every day. And to my advisor, who challenged me throughout this entire process, the final outcome of this work is far superior as a result of your ongoing influence.

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Chapter One

Introduction & Background

“Student Affairs is a critical aspect of the higher education experience. The work done by student affairs professionals helps students begin a lifetime journey of growth and self-exploration” (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education website). The work of student affairs requires expert knowledge of students and environmental influences on their development, providing services and programs that respond to the needs of the “whole student” (Keeling, 2004). The student affairs profession requires a commitment to the day-to-day lives of students outside of the classroom setting and naturally aligns itself with individuals whose work responsibilities can dominate their personal responsibilities (Cameron, 2011; Rosser, 2000; Stimpson, 2009; Wilk, 2013; Young, 1990). For example, when a campus crisis occurs at 3:00 am, student affairs administrators may need to respond by going to campus, regardless of their care-giving responsibilities for their children or aging parents. When personal commitments impact their ability to respond to their work responsibilities or vice versa, work-family concerns can emerge for these professionals (Cameron, 2011). Further, student affairs administrators who are mothers face unique challenges as they manage their careers and family roles, as women assume the majority of childcare responsibilities regardless of their own employment status or that of their spouse/partner (O’Laughlin & Bishchoff, 2005; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012; Stimpson, 2009; Williams, 2000).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the work-family experiences of mid-career student affairs administrators, who are also mothers, employed at institutions known for work-life supports. Increasingly, workplaces have implemented practices to address the growing

overlap of work and personal responsibilities of employees. These practices, commonly referred to as work-life policies, help define one of the 12 key features institutions are evaluated on for the purposes of the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* annual list, "Great Colleges to Work For." Using that list to identify institutions recognized in the work-life balance category, indicating they have policies that "give employees the flexibility to manage their lives on the job and at home," this study specifically explores the following four research questions:

1. How do mothers in mid-career, student affairs administrator roles, at institutions known for their work-life supports, describe their experiences of work-family balance?
2. What knowledge do these mothers have of the existing work-life policies at their respective institutions?
3. How do the existing work-life policies influence the perception of workplace culture and norms of these women balancing their career and family?
4. How does the perception of their own work-family balance affect the intended career trajectory, or desire for professional advancement, of these women?

Definitions

Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrator

Student affairs is differentiated by functional area, specialization, expertise, and training and can include areas such as housing, student activities, judicial affairs, orientation programs, admissions, registration, financial aid, counseling, advising, and other aspects of student life (Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser, 2000; Rosser, 2000; Young, 1990). Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and College Student Education International (ACPA), the two major professional organizations for student affairs administration, both refer to mid-level professionals as those who have five or more years of full-time professional experience. These

professionals are typically in exempt positions that require a master's degree or higher.

According to the Fair Labor and Standards Act, a primary duty of exempt positions "includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance," whereas non-exempt, or hourly staff positions, do not require that level of discretion and judgment (The 2015 Joint Economic Report).

For the purposes of this study, a mid-career student affairs administrator was defined as someone with five or more years of full-time professional experience within student affairs, but not as a Chief Student Affairs Officer. All of the women in this study were employed as a student affairs administrator at one of two universities listed in the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* annual list of the "Great Colleges to Work For" and held titles ranging from assistant or associate director to assistant dean or assistant vice-president.

Work-Family Balance vs. Work-Life Balance

Work-family balance generally refers to the interaction and overlap between work and family and one's ability to manage them both effectively; whereas, work-life balance encompasses all personal domains (Chang, McDonald, & Burton, 2010; Dickson, 2008; Koppes & Swanberg, 2008). Personal domains include family demands such as caregiving responsibilities (for children, aging parents, or others) and household responsibilities such as cleaning, cooking, paying bills, lawn and garden care, as well as encompass leisure activities, volunteer work, academics, personal wellness, spirituality and social domains (Cameron, 2011; Chang, McDonald, & Burton, 2010; Fochtman, 2010; O'Laughlin & Bishchoff, 2005). The work domain includes all paid-for work responsibilities. This study specifically sought to better understand how mothers, working in student affairs roles, experience work-family balance.

The Workplace and Work-Family Balance

Ideal Worker Norms. The work-family balance experiences of student affairs professionals are influenced by ideal worker norms (Wilk, 2013). The concept of an “ideal worker” is predicated on the notion that work and personal domains are distinctly separate entities, based on gender roles (Davies & Frink, 2014; Wilk, 2013; Williams, 2000). In the early-to mid-20th century, families were most commonly constructed with a male who went to work each day and a wife who assumed the responsibilities of home and family (Davies & Frink, 2014; Jones, 2012; Williams, 2000). During that same time frame, mothers were rarely unmarried or working outside of the home. For example, as late as 1960 only 10 percent of mothers were employed outside the home, and only 10 percent of mothers were unmarried (Jones, 2012). Employers could assume that paid work was the only, or at least the primary, responsibility of their ideal workers (Bailyn, 1993; Kelly, Kossek, Hammer, Durham, Bray, Chermack, Murphy, & Kaskubar, 2008). A workplace constructed around ideal worker norms presumes their employees can completely separate home from work, putting their work duties before all personal responsibilities (Bailyn, 1993; Davies & Frink, 2014; Kelly et al., 2008).

Since the 1950s, many changes have occurred in the workplace. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 addressed gender based discrimination in the workplace and Title IX opened doors for women wanting to access nontraditional fields (Davies & Frink, 2014; Jones, 2012). In 1970, 41 percent of the labor force was female, compared to a peak of 69 percent in 1999, followed by a decline of 12 percent over the next 15 years (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). In 2014, 57 percent of working-age women were employed outside the home and nearly 40 percent of married women earned more than their husbands (The 2015 Joint Economic Report).

Additionally, nearly 66 percent of mothers, in married couple families, were employed outside the home in 2014 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.).

The student affairs administrator role naturally aligns itself with individuals who can separate their work and personal responsibilities, and always prioritize the work commitments when overlap occurs (Cameron, 2011; Rosser, 2000; Wilk, 2013; Young, 1990). For the purposes of this study, the ideal worker model was a relevant starting point to understand workplace culture and norms, as the nature of the position lends itself to someone who can put work before all other responsibilities (Cameron, 2011; Fochtman, 2010; Spangler, 2011). The concept of an ideal worker may work for employees who have limited personal responsibilities, or who can always rely on someone else to assume those tasks. Mothers, however, do not fit the framework of an ideal worker with the flexibility to prioritize work responsibilities over personal responsibilities at all times (Bailyn, Drago, & Kochan, 2001; Cameron, 2011).

Institutions Recognized for Work-Life Supports

Workplaces are responding to the changing workforce demographics by implementing policies to support working parents (The 2015 Joint Economic Report). For example, Google, which has topped Fortune 100's "Best Companies to Work For" list five times, offers their employees compressed work weeks and job sharing, onsite childcare and fitness centers, as well as paid sabbaticals (Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For List, 2014). The present study used the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* annual list of the "Great Colleges to Work For" to find institutions that have repeatedly been recognized for their work-life supports.

In 2008, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and ModernThink LLC began partnering to administer an annual survey used to produce the list of "Great Colleges to Work For." Non-profit institutions of higher education who have over 500 students, and are located in the United States,

are eligible to participate. There is no cost associated with participation, but institutions are expected to commit to the two-part assessment process for a period of two years. One of the 12 domains studied for the purpose of the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* list is work-life balance. Work-life balance as it relates to the survey was defined by “policies existing to provide employees flexibility on managing professional and personal responsibilities.” An example statement is “My supervisor/department chair supports my efforts to balance my work and personal life.” The *2014 Higher Education Workplace Trend Report* highlighted two institutions for their best practices regarding work-life policies. The 4-year college best practices in the report noted the generous holiday and vacation packages, flexible work arrangements, and free employee assistance program at Notre Dame University. The 2-year college best practices, highlighted at Howard Community College, included the phased retirement program and leave time for employees to exercise during the workday.

According to the 2014 Higher Education Workplace Trend Report 78% of four-year large institutions (enrollment over 10,000) reported having work-life balance programs; however, only three of those institutions were recognized for work-life supports since 2010: Baylor University, George Mason University, and Sam Houston State University. Baylor University (BU) and Sam Houston State University (SHSU) were selected as sites for this study because of their proximity to the researcher. Interestingly, both BU and SHSU were also recognized for work-life balance in the 2015 iteration of the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* survey. Each institution is described in greater detail in the methodology section, including details related to student life and the defined work-life policies at each university. It is also worth noting that in a stratified random sample of 704 institutions from the 2000 Carnegie list, including all member institutions of the College and University Work-Family Association, the average number of work-family policies across all

institutional types was 1.67, with an average of 1.38 policies at doctoral-granting institutions (Hollenshead, Sullivan, Smith, August, & Hamilton, 2005). BU and SHSU are both doctoral granting-institutions; and, with more than 15 work-life policies described on their human resources websites, they appear to be rich in work-life supports compared to the national averages. Examples of the work-life support policies at these universities include abundant leave time, tuition reimbursement for self and family, release time, and financial incentives for physical wellness.

For the purposes of this study, when discussing institutions known for their work-life supports, I am referring to those recognized by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* for work-life balance. Regardless of their recognition for the existence of numerous work-life policies, and overall reports of faculty and staff perception of work-life balance these institutions, the question remaining was whether mothers in student affairs roles perceived these institutions as family-friendly. Did the recognition for work-life balance translate to a supportive work-family environment for this specific subgroup of employees? The present study sought to answer those two important questions.

Work-Family Policies vs. Work-Life Policies

While the current study was focused on understanding work-family balance, some of the workplace policies discussed are not exclusively geared towards employees with children. Work-family policies are those specifically intended to support balance between work and family life for those with caregiving responsibilities, whereas work-life supports are more generalizable to those employees with or without children (Chang, McDonald, & Burton, 2010). For example, family-friendly policies might include leave benefits related to the birth of child, childcare subsidies, or onsite child care centers; whereas, telecommuting, job sharing (two people split

responsibilities for performing one job), flextime, or compressed work weeks are work-life supports because they could support balance for parents or nonparents (Williams, 2000). For the purposes of this study, institutions recognized for their work-life supports were identified in an effort to better understand the work-family balance experience of mid-career student affairs administrators who were also mothers.

Work-Life Supports

Work-life policies are intended to improve work performance and organizational effectiveness by reducing conflict between competing demands (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Work-life policies assist employees with personal life responsibilities by providing onsite services (for example, childcare, fitness center) and referral programs (such as Employee Assistance Programs or Health Promotion Programs), as well as support a workplace culture of flexibility by providing staff with greater choice in when and how their work responsibilities are completed and how their sick time is used (Hollenshead et al., 2005; Kossek, Lewis, Hammer, 2010). Research has shown that work-life policies reduce employee absenteeism (Casey & Grywacz, 2008; Hammer & Neal, 2008), increase job commitment (Casey & Grywacz, 2008; Dickson, 2008), improve job satisfaction (Dickson, 2008; Kossek & Lee, 2008), and positively impact the mental and physical health of employees (Casey & Grywacz, 2008). Additionally, the existence of formal work-life policies is seen as a key factor contributing to improved work-life balance, and work-family balance, for staff across all industries (Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011; Casey & Grzywacz, 2008; Jo, 2008; Lizotte, 2001; MacDermid, 2005; Maxwell, 2005; O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005; Reddy, Vranda, Ahmed, Nirmala, & Siddaramu, 2010; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004b; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2005). Specifically, the perception of flexibility and control over

when and where work responsibilities are completed has been positively associated with work-family balance and negatively associated with conflict between work and family (Kelly et al., 2008). The present study focused on mothers working at institutions that have been recognized for their work-life supports in the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* annual list of the “Great Colleges to Work For,” since 2011.

Workplace Culture and Norms

Workplace culture contributes to the work-family experiences of staff, because culture can influence how, and if, employees utilize existing policies (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Collins, 2009; Darcy, McCarth, Hill, & Grady, 2012; Hollenshead et al., 2005; McNamara, Pitt-Catsouphes, Brown, & Matz-Costa, 2012; Van Allen, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004b). A workplace culture predicated on ideal norms may discourage employees from utilizing work-life support benefits (Bailyn, 1993; Kelly et al., 2008). Informal social workplace norms, perpetuated by colleagues and supervisors, can foster a value of support, or non-support, of responsibilities outside the workplace (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2010). “Cultural support operates at two interactive levels: the work group level, where one receives relationship support from managers or co-workers; and, the organizational level where resources and overarching cultural values and norms are engendered” (Kossek, et al., 2010, p.5). When utilization of work-life policies is not seen as a core workplace norm, employees may believe usage will have a negative effect on their career trajectory (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Collins, 2009; Darcy et al., 2012; Hollenshead et al., 2005; McNamara et al., 2012; Van Allen, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004b). Lester (2013) conducted two case studies of institutions undergoing intentional cultural changes through participation in a grant promoting work-life balance, “to establish more practices, policies, and cultural change for work-life balance” (p. 485). New work-life policies were

developed through a collaborative process across academic units, helping to contribute to a reduction in negative stigmas associated with using existing policies at these institutions (Lester, 2013).

Work-life policies are also not always equally provided for all staff, creating perceived work-life barriers (Cameron, 2011). For example, in Lester's (2013) study, an unintentional hierarchy in terms of who deserved access to work-life supports was created because faculty were the target audience of the policies and staff did not have equal access to use the policies. In Cameron's (2011) study, student affairs administrators who were single or nonparents believed their married counterparts with children received more flexibility and access to formal work-life policies. This left the single, nonparent administrators feeling their personal responsibilities were not seen as important as the caregiving duties of parenthood (Cameron, 2011).

Institutions with formalized work-life supports, have policies in place to help employees manage their work and non-work responsibilities, regardless of their parental status. For this study, the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* annual list of the "Great Colleges to Work For" was used to identify institutions known for work-life balance because it both examined the number of policies in existence, as well as staff and faculty perception of those supports. The women in the current study were asked to: 1) share their experiences balancing their work and family responsibilities, 2) discuss the work-life policies they have benefited from, 3) reflect on the culture of the institution and their department in terms of work-family balance, 4) and talk about their long-term career goals.

Importance of the Study

This study focused on student affairs professionals and their ability to maintain some semblance of work-family balance, an important value that mirrors the deeply seated roots of the

profession that emphasizes and prioritizes the goal of developing “the whole student” or the “whole person.” Indeed, developing the “whole student” has been described as a core value of student affairs throughout the history of the profession (*The Student Personnel Point of View*, 1937, 1949; *A Perspective On Student Affairs*, 1987; *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs*, 1998; *Envisioning the Future of Student Affairs*, 2010). In 1937, the American Council on Education Studies wrote a document, *The Student Personnel Point of View*, which serves as a foundational document for the profession. In that document, the governing philosophy of the student affairs profession was described as:

the obligation to consider the student as a whole – his intellectual capacity and achievement, his emotional make up, his physical condition, his social relationships, his vocational aptitudes and skills, his moral and religious values, his economic resources, his aesthetic appreciation (p. 3).

In 1949, the revised version by Williams also emphasized the primary concern of student affairs administrators’ work as “the development of students as whole persons, interacting in social situations” (p. 2). When the document was revised again in 1987, it included a list of guiding assumptions and beliefs that shape the work of student affairs professionals, emphasizing the “whole student.” These principles reflect a commitment to the unique personal characteristics and experiences of individual students and how those factors influence the students’ contribution to the learning environment and their own learning experience. In a profession grounded in a commitment to the “whole student,” it is reasonable for student affairs administrators to expect to be seen as more than their work responsibilities, and supported in their professional and personal commitments. The focus on the “whole student” implies a focus on employees’ development as “whole people.”

The ideal worker model is commonly reflected in the nature of student affairs positions (Cameron, 2011; Wilk, 2013), but appears incongruent with the values of the profession (NASPA, 1987). In the modern work world, professional and personal lives are not mutually exclusive. At times there is spillover from work to home and from home to work (Koppes, 2008). This study intentionally focused on mothers in student affairs roles, an employee population who has previously expressed challenges with work-family balance, (Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Ting & Watt, 1999). Specifically, work-family concerns have contributed to the decision of women to sacrifice career advancement in student affairs (Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Ting & Watt, 1999), and, in some cases, sacrifice personal priorities as a result of work responsibilities (Stimpson, 2009). This study sought to understand the work-family experiences of mothers in a job role influenced by ideal worker norms (student affairs roles), working at a workplace with defined policies to support employee's roles beyond the institution. If it is not achieved here, at a place that might be considered optimal, then it might be perceived as more difficult elsewhere.

The current study expands the limited research related to the work-family balance experiences of female student affairs administrators, by focusing on mothers working at institutions known for work-life supports. This study improves our understanding of: 1) the work-family experiences of mid-career student affairs administrators managing motherhood, 2) the influence of work-life policies on workplace culture and positional norms related to the student affairs administrator role, and 3) the influence of the work-family experiences of these women on their intended career trajectory. The knowledge gained from this study may be used to identify support structures that positively contribute to work-family balance among parents in student affairs roles, as well as pinpoint supports that are lacking. Furthermore, this information

could better inform broad higher education institutional practices. By examining work-family balance in the context of institutions that are supposedly providing good work-life supports, insight is gained regarding formalized workplace supports. Additionally, greater understanding regarding whether these particular workplace contexts, noted for the presence of work-life friendly policies, are offering the supports needed by student affairs professionals. If not, we need to rethink the value of the types of ratings and further explore what supports are needed.

What follows, in Chapter Two, is a summary of the existing research related to navigating competing work and personal responsibilities as a working parent, and more specifically, as a female student affairs administrator. This includes a focused discussion on the target demographic for this study, as well as the intentionality behind only soliciting participants who were employed at one of the two university sites. In Chapter Three, I describe the overall research design and qualitative methodology used for the study. Additionally, institutional and participant characteristics are provided, as well as the procedures for data collection and analysis. Chapter Four is a presentation of the findings, grouped by the themes that emerged as the data were analyzed. Finally, Chapter Five provides a summary of the noteworthy findings and concludes with recommendations for institutions to consider with regards to their role in providing support structures for related to managing work and family responsibilities and suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

I begin this literature review by discussing what is known regarding work-related influences on the overall work experience of administrators in higher education. I then describe the existing literature on the work-family experience of mid-career student affairs administrators, and the effect of perceived imbalance on their career trajectory. This is followed by a discussion on how parenthood differentially effects working men and women. This review provides insight into why mid-career, student affairs administrators who are mothers, are the target demographic for this study. I then explore the role of ideal worker norms, in relationship to the formation of workplace policies and culture. The concept of the ideal worker is then defined in an effort to frame the relevance of the subsequent sections on work-life policies and workplace culture and norms. These sections are important to understanding the rationale behind identifying institutions known for their work-life supports for this study.

Student Affairs Administrators Navigating Work-family Balance

For the purposes of this study, work-family balance was defined as the interaction and overlap between one's personal and work domains, as well as one's ability to manage both effectively (Chang, McDonald, Burton, 2010; Dickson, 2008; Koppes & Swanberg, 2008). Several studies have looked at the impact of the work domain on university administrators' morale (Johnsrud, 2002; Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser, 2000; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999; Rosser, 2004; Rosser & Javinar, 2003), satisfaction (Johnsrud, 2002; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Rosser, 2004; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Smerek & Peterson, 2007), and intention to leave (Johnsrud, 2002; Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser, 2000; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). Those studies, however, did not consider how personal responsibilities might

contribute to the work domain, nor were they specifically focused on student affairs administrators. Rosser (2004) did acknowledge that factors in the personal domain could impact the work domain, stating “there may be other influences such as geographic mobility, dual careers, and personal and family issues that may have an impact on their morale, satisfaction and intention to stay in or leave their position, career, or institution” (p. 322).

Student Affairs Administrator Role

The nature of student affairs work lends itself to occur around students’ time outside of the classroom, which in large part occurs beyond a traditional 8:00am to 5:00pm workday. This creates opportunities for spillover from work to, what some may consider personal time. In addition, mid-career student affairs professionals are naturally at an age common to have personal responsibilities that may spillover into work responsibilities, particularly when those work responsibilities occur outside of 8:00am to 5:00pm (Cameron, 2011; Fochtman 2010; Spangler, 2011). For example, it is not unusual for mid-career administrators to have children, to be taking care of aging parents, or to be in long-term relationships managing a dual career partnership (Cameron, 2011; Fochtman, 2010).

Cameron (2011) and Wilk (2013) both explicitly focused on the construct of work-life balance among administrators in higher education. The participants in Cameron’s (2011) study were mid-level student affairs administrators, between the ages of 28 and 39, from a variety of institutional types. The participants consisted of 11 males and 19 females, although gender differences were not discussed. The administrators were asked to describe their own work-life experiences, as well as their perceptions of structures that existed in their work environment that assisted, or interfered, with their work-life responsibilities. The participants expressed burnout, stress, and a feeling that they were always on, likely a result of the 24/7 nature of their role. They

also expressed difficulty in separating their personal and work roles as a result of extended evening and weekend hours, on-call responsibilities for days or weeks at a time, and the expectation that certain job responsibilities were completed during normal university business hours.

Wilk (2013) sought to understand how the perception of work-life balance (related to policies, norms, and subcultures) varied among higher education administrators in exempt positions working in student affairs, finance, or technology. She interviewed 32 male and female higher education administrators, between the ages of 25-60, at a private doctoral granting institution in the Northeast. All of the single participants who reported poor work-life balance were student affairs administrators (Wilk, 2013). While all of the administrators in Wilk's (2013) study felt there was an expectation that they had a physical presence in the office during normal business hours, 12 of the 14 student affairs administrators worked at night and on weekends as a regular part of their job duties. It is because of this unique natural interaction between work and personal responsibilities of mid-career student affairs administrators that they were chosen as the demographic focus for the present study.

While Cameron (2011) and Wilk (2013) included both male and female administrators in their studies, the current study explicitly focused on women who are mothers. Wilk's (2013) study highlights important difference between male and female administrators; most notably that 1) men (78%) were more likely than women (43%) to report good or excellent work-life balance, and 2) mothers (80%) were far more likely than fathers (25%) to report poor work-life balance. Additionally, although the student affairs administrators in Cameron's (2011) study described significant challenges in competing work and personal duties, 67% of the participants were not parents, and consequently, also not juggling the demands of parenthood with work.

Balance and Career Trajectory for Female, Mid-career Student Affairs Administrators

Earlier studies examined the challenges women have experienced managing dueling work and family commitments as mid-level student affairs administrators (Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999). Ting and Watt (1999) interviewed 21 female student services professionals (seven were in assistant director to director level positions and eight were graduate students in higher education) to learn about their career development in student affairs. Just over a third of the professional staff in their study discussed an intention to leave their career within five years, as a result of their personal commitments to their family and marriage, and the demands of the student affairs role (Ting & Watt, 1999). Nobbe and Manning (1997) sought to understand the experiences of 35 mothers who were in director level or higher positions in student affairs. These women changed their career goals, delayed or gave up the pursuit of a doctorate, and did not seek career advancement because of the perceived incongruence between the work time required for the next level of position and their desired time with their family.

More than 10 years later, not much had changed (Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Spangler, 2011). The 10 mid-career student affairs administrators who were mothers in Fochtman's (2010) study gave up professional opportunities - such as advancement in student affairs, graduate school, or involvement in professional organizations - to raise their children and have more time with their partner or friends. While these women owned their choice to prioritize their personal roles over their career goals, they also felt a need to sacrifice one domain to the benefit of another (Fochtman, 2010). Spangler (2011) interviewed six female, mid-level, student affairs administrators to examine the conflict between the position and motherhood. The women in Spangler's (2011) study expressed that motherhood changed their career choices and

expectations. Specifically, the women chose to reduce their conference attendance, even at a cost to their own professional development. Additionally, they chose to remain at their current institution longer than they planned (over 12 years for all participants), sacrificing their own professional advancement (Spangler, 2011). Collins (2009) wanted to understand why six women with doctorates in higher education, or a related field, had declined an offer for a Chief Student Affairs Officer (CSAO) position. Four of the women in Collins' (2009) study had children. All six women shared that their intended career trajectory early in their career was to be a CSAO, but chose not to accept a CSAO position in order to have more time with their partner, spouse, and/or children. These women perceived career advancement would come at a cost to their personal life and were willing to sacrifice their own career advancement to benefit their family (Collins, 2009).

Bailey (2011) interviewed 15 mid-career professionals regarding their experiences as a professional and mother. These women felt constantly torn between competing priorities at work and home. This was particularly true when commitments did not easily coordinate, such as when they had a sick child, meetings outside of normal business hours, or an after-hours crisis at work. They also expressed a need to always be connected to work through technology, either because of the nature of their position, or because of the departmental expectation that they respond to work-related communication immediately (Bailey, 2011). Bailey (2011) also explored the strategies these mothers used to manage their roles as a mid-career student affairs administrator and parent. Five of the most common ways these women negotiated work-life balance were self-constructed: building support systems, defining boundaries, managing time efficiently, focusing on family, taking care of self (Bailey, 2011).

These prior studies provide insight into how managing personal and work responsibilities can influence the career path of female student affairs professionals (Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999). Consistent with prior research, the current study focused exclusively on the experiences of women who are in mid-career student affairs positions (Bailey, 2011; Collins, 2009; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011). Additionally, a goal of the current study was to expand what was known about the work-family experiences of mothers.

Differential Impacts of Work-Family for Moms and Dads

Parenthood brings with it a set of responsibilities that cannot always be shelved in order to focus primary attention on work tasks; consequently, working parents naturally have factors that contribute to poor work-family balance (Bailyn, 1993; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Jo, 2008; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999; Wilk, 2013). Although parenthood can contribute to work-family balance challenges for both working men and women, they are differentially affected because women still assume the majority of childcare responsibilities even when they occupy full-time work positions (Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson, & Kicklighter, 1998; Jones, 2012; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012; Spangler, 2011; Stimpson, 2009; Stone, 2007; Wilk, 2013; Williams, 2000). For example, in addition to the professional responsibilities associated with their mid-career student affairs position, the women in Spangler's (2011) study, all of whom were married, described being responsible for the management of their family schedule as their responsibility. The coordination of that schedule included reminding their children of school deadlines, arranging for their spouse to pick-up/drop-off kids for school or other activities, making arrangements for childcare, and dealing with things outside the normal routine, such as having a sick child (Spangler, 2011). In

Wilk's (2013) study of higher education administrators, 80 percent of the women under the age of 40 with young children reported poor work-life balance, in comparison with only 25 percent of their male counterparts.

Having a partner at home to assume caregiving and other personal tasks allows an employee the ability to fully focus on his/her responsibilities at work, and may lend itself to the professional advancement of that employee (Bailyn, 1993; Jones, 2012). Many men appear to have a family dynamic that allows them to thrive in a workplace conceptualized through the lens of the ideal worker, whose work responsibilities can dominate their personal responsibilities, whereas most women do not (Bailyn, 1993; Emslie & Hunt, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; O'Laughlin & Bishchoff, 2005; Stimpson, 2009; Ting & Watt, 1999; Williams, 2000). Instead, some women either eliminate personal obstacles they anticipate may spill over into work (possibly remaining single or not assuming a primary caregiver role) or choose not to pursue career advancement out of concern that their work responsibilities may spillover into their personal domain (Bailyn, 1993; Collins, 2009; Emslie & Hunt, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; O'Laughlin & Bishchoff, 2005; Stimpson, 2009; Ting & Watt, 1999; Williams, 2000).

Stone (2007) wanted to better understand why high achieving, college educated, married, professional women with children were no longer employed outside of the home. She interviewed 54 white, married mothers who had previously worked in a professional or managerial position. Many of the women had worked in male-dominated fields, where women were absent from senior-level positions, or, when women did occupy upper-level roles, they did not have children. While the participants in her study indicated that their workplaces had policies to encourage and support their maternity leave, they did not have supports in place to facilitate

successful transition back into the workplace after such leave. Additionally, these women described support from their spouses to exit the workplace, giving them permission to quit if they chose. However, the women also reported their spouses did not provide the support they needed to return to their professional position (Stone, 2007).

Research also shows that more men than women in upper management positions are married, have children, and have a partner who assumes the responsibilities of home and family (Bailyn, 1993; Williams, 2000). This phenomena has been seen in corporate America (Bailyn, 1993; Emslie & Hunt, 2009; Williams, 2000), among faculty in higher education (Bailyn, 1993; O’Laughlin & Bishchoff, 2005), and with student affairs administrators (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Stimpson, 2009). Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) surveyed 344 full-time student affairs administrators related to burnout factors. For those administrators without children, men and women scored similarly on an emotional exhaustion scale. Mothers, however, had the highest mean on an emotional exhaustion scale, and fathers the lowest mean. This gender difference was attributed to the fact that female CSAOs with children also reported being the primary caregiver for their children (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998). Stimpson (2009) interviewed five male and five female CSAOs. The males were significantly more likely than their female counterparts to be married, or in long term relationships, and have children with a partner who assumed the primary caregiving responsibilities, similar to the findings of Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998). The men in Stimpson’s (2009) study were also more likely to have completed their doctoral education than the women, which mirrors findings that female student affairs administrators have repeatedly demonstrated sacrificing their career advancement to benefit their personal life (Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Ting & Watt, 1999).

The nature of the student affairs role contributes to overlap between work and person domains (Cameron, 2011; Fochtman 2010; Spangler, 2011). Female student affairs administrators experience unique work-family challenges as mothers because they are more likely to assume the primary caregiver role (Fochtman, 2010; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Stimpson, 2009; Ting & Watt, 1999), and less likely than men to have family circumstances that allow their attention to be focused on their work responsibilities above all other commitments (Bailyn, 1993; Emslie & Hunt, 2009; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; O’Laughlin & Bishchoff, 2005; Stimpson, 2009; Williams, 2000). Consequently, mothers, who were mid-career working as a student affairs administrator, were the target demographic for the current study.

Ideal Worker Norms and the Role of the Workplace

Even with the increased number of women, dual career couples, and working parents in the workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.; U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, 2010), “both the ideal worker and separation of work and home remain largely unchallenged as cultural norms” (Davies & Frink, 2014, p. 34). The workplace continues to be developed around managers and professionals who are expected to arrange their personal responsibilities around their paid work, using few vacation days, and moving up the ladder by putting in overtime (Bailyn, 1993; Colbeck & Drago, 2005; Davies & Frink, 2014; Kelly et al., 2008). For parents working in environments developed around the ideal worker norm, there is an assumption that they have a partner to tend to the tasks of the family and home (Bailyn, 1993; Bailyn, Drago, & Kochan, 2001; Davies & Frink, 2014; Drago, Wooden, & Black, 2009; Jones, 2012; Williams, 2000). Work structured around a presumption that employees have no family responsibilities ignores the needs of working parents (Bailyn et al., 2001; Davies & Frink, 2014; Jones, 2012).

These types of ideal worker norms have greater negative impact on mothers who still disproportionately assume the majority of caregiving and household responsibilities (Bailyn et al., 2001; Jones, 2012).

Prior studies on the work-life balance experiences of student affairs professionals have shown ideal worker norms influence workplace culture and norms of student affairs administrators (Cameron, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Stimpson, 2009; Ting & Watt, 1999; Wilk, 2013). The current study focused on the work-family experiences of student affairs administrators working at institutions that have implemented work-life policies, because these types of policies are predicated on the fact that individuals have responsibilities outside of work. This intentional focus on institutions known for their work-life supports can provide insight into the influence of policy on the work-family experience of mothers.

Work-Life Policies

In response to an evolving workforce including more women, working parents, and dual career couples, some workplaces have developed work-life policies (Bailyn, 1993; Bailyn et al., 2001; Davies & Frink, 2014; Drago et al., 2009; The 2015 Joint Economic Report). Work-life policies can be categorized into five groups: time-based, money-based, direct services, information-based, and workplace flexibility (Koppes, 2008; McNamara et al., 2012). Time-based policies provide flexibility related to the timing of work. These arrangements can include flexible work schedules, compressed work weeks, time off for education, professional development, or physical wellness, as well as the ability to take unpaid vacation days, sabbaticals, or career breaks (Koppes, 2008; McNamara et al., 2012). While time-based policies provide leave time, money-based policies provide funding to support education, professional

development, or even childcare needs. Direct services policies bring many of those same types of services directly to the employee; onsite childcare, fitness centers, or other educational programs. There also are information-based policies, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) that connect employees to counseling, childcare, or other resources, removing the burden of locating those services from the employee to the employer (Koppes, 2008; McNamara et al., 2012). Finally, workplace flexibility provides employees with the choice of where to work (Beauregard & Henry, 2009).

Work-life policies are used to attract new employees to organizations and retain existing employees (Atkinson & Hall, 2011; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Hollenshead et al., 2005; The 2015 Joint Economic Report; Kelly et al., 2008; Lester, 2013; Lewison, 2006; Lizotte, 2001; Williams, 2000). In one study of Certified Public Accountants, over a quarter placed greater value on work-family balance than on competitive wages or job security (Lewison, 2006). Work-life policies have been shown to increase employee productivity, consequently improving organizational effectiveness and commitment (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Casey & Grywacz, 2008; Dickson, 2008; Kelly et al., 2008; Siegwarth-Meyer, Mukerjee, & Sestero, 2001; Williams, 2000). Additionally, employees who spend more time on family than work have been shown to experience a higher quality of life than those individuals who: 1) spend more time on work than family or 2) spend equal amounts of time in both domains (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003).

Many studies have also found links between the existence of flexible working environments, greater job satisfaction, (Dickson, 2008; Ferguson, Carlson, Zivnuska, & Whitten, 2012; Kelly et al., 2008; Kossek & Lee, 2008) and a reduction in employee absenteeism (Atkinson & Hall, 2011; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Casey & Grzywacz, 2008; Hammer &

Neal, 2008; Kelly et al., 2008; Pandu, Balu, & Poorani, 2013; Siegwarth-Meyer, Mukerjee, & Sestero, 2001; Williams, 2000). According to Lewison (2006), upwards of 25 percent of all employee absences are for family related issues; and, work-life policies give employees the flexibility they need to attend to family responsibilities, reducing absences. If employees are not allowed the flexibility to respond to personal issues, such as the illness of a child, they will leave (Williams, 2000). Reducing employee turnover saves the organization time and money, which is particularly important for jobs that require a special skill, education, or training because of a narrowed candidate pool and post-hiring time required for training (Davidson, 2012; Kelly et al., 2008; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). The present study seeks to expand the very limited research on the work-family experiences of student affairs professionals who are mothers by examining the role existing policies play on supporting work-family balance.

Workplace Culture and Norms

Although formal work-life policies contribute to work-life balance for staff across industries, not all employees have equal access to them (Bailey, 2011; Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011; Casey & Grzywacz, 2008; Jo, 2008; Koppes, 2008; Lizotte, 2001; MacDermid, 2005; Maxwell, 2005; O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000; Reddy et al., 2010; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012; Stone, 2007; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004b; Williams & Dolkas, 2012). How work-life policies are implemented for a particular employee is often at the discretion of the supervisor, consequently, giving supervisors and managers tremendous influence over employee utilization of existing work-life policies (Bailey, 2011; Koppes, 2008; Maxwell, 2005; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000; Stone, 2007; Williams & Dolkas, 2012). McNamara et al. (2012) investigated demographic, job-related, and workplace characteristics with regards to

the likelihood of access and utilizations of flexible work policies. Their population was comprised of 2149 employees at nine different organizations, including higher education, health care, retails, insurance, financial services, professional, scientific, and technical services, and pharmaceuticals. The employees with more advanced levels of education in their study had greater access to flexible work options (McNamara et al., 2012). This is similar to other studies that found those in upper-level management positions, in which advanced education was more likely to be required, had greater access to workplace flexibility (Kelly et al., 2008; Williams, 2000).

Even when employees do have access to work-life policies, because of the existence of the policy and/or supervisor support of the practice, not all employees use them. For example, Lewison (2006) stated CPA firms have been among the most responsive in implementing work-family policies; however, when the corporate culture is not supportive of the use of such policies, they fail. When the use of work-life balance policies are not seen as a core workplace norm, they can contribute to a workplace culture where employees choose not to use policies they perceived could have a negative impact on their career trajectory (Bailey, 2011; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Collins, 2009; Darcy et al., 2012; Hollenshead et al., 2005; McNamara et al., 2012; Van Allen, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004b). Darcy et al. (2012) surveyed 729 employees in 15 organizations (10 private and 5 public) in Ireland, to determine differential effects of career stage/age on work-life balance. They found perceived career consequence to be negatively associated with utilization of existing work-life policies for those who were 18-39, but still present for those 40-49 and, although not statistically significant, true for those over 50 years old as well (Darcy et al., 2012).

Resistance to the use of some work-life policies (maternity and paternity leaves) by faculty in higher education have been linked to passive, male-dominated, subcultures and senior level colleagues and direct discouragement from co-workers (Colbeck & Drago, 2005; Hollenshead et al., 2005). When employees delay, minimize, or hide their personal responsibilities from colleagues in order to avoid potential stigmas that could be associated with those responsibilities, and the resulting negative effect on their career, they are engaging in bias avoidance (Colbeck & Drago, 2005). Bias avoidance strategies are used to circumvent potential career penalties associated with caregiving, facilitating career success by increasing the time and energy employees are available for work responsibilities (Drago et al., 2006). In a multi-stage project involving surveys and case studies of a national sample of Chemistry and English faculty, Colbeck and Drago (2005) explored the perceptions of bias against caregiving responsibilities, how faculty respond to those perceptions, and what can be done to alleviate that bias. Many of the faculty in Colbeck and Drago's (2005) study participated in bias avoidance strategies, although the phenomena were more present among women. For example, out of fear for the potential negative repercussions on their career, 16.1 percent of females (10 percent of males) remained single, 25.5 percent of females (12.6 percent of males) had fewer children than they desired, and 12.7 percent of females (6.8 percent of males) delayed having a second child (Colbeck & Drago, 2005).

While the perception of workplace culture obviously varies for student affairs administrators in higher education, their experience is routinely described as imbalanced and indicates there may be some cultural norms related to the position that may, or may not, be circumvented by existing work-life policies (Bailey, 2011; Cameron, 2011; Wilk, 2013). In fact, nearly all of the mothers in Spangler's (2011) study discussed how the campus environment

impacted their ability to successfully navigate work-family balance as a student affairs administrator. More specifically, the participants in Spangler's (2011) study suggested others interested in being a mother, and having a career in student affairs, should consider seeking employment at a campus where the institutional culture and policies were "family-friendly."

Past research related to managing work and family responsibilities among administrators has routinely left out details related to existing institutional policies, or provided limited detail related workplace cultural norms (Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Ting & Watt, 1999). Wilk's (2013) research examining the work-life experiences of higher education administrators working in student affairs, finance, or technology, is the only study focused on administrators in higher education that included a reference to the existing institutional work-life policies. The university in Wilk's (2013) study had two work-life policies in place, which, while higher than the national average of 1.67 (Hollenshead et al., 2005), would certainly not be classified as a work-life balance policy-rich environment.

To date, only one study has been identified that intentionally selected an institution known for work-life policies as a part of the research design (Lester, 2013). Lester's (2013) study consisted of two case studies to learn more about the role of organizational culture in regards to work-family balance in higher education. For both of the institutions undergoing organizational change in Lester's (2013) study, senior leadership drove the process for creating formalized work-life policies in an effort to improve retention and recruitment of female faculty; staff were not an intentional focus of the study. For both campuses, a focus on connecting work-life to the retention of faculty provided validity to using institutional resources and time towards the effort; however, the narrow focus on faculty work-life excluded staff and students and created a hierarchy related to who "deserved" work-life benefits (Lester, 2013). Additionally, each

operational unit was the primary influence over how broadly work-life policies were accepted and utilized within departments, with “relational and noncompetitive departments [being] more accepting of the work-life and more likely to adhere to policies and guidelines and offer flexible work arrangements to staff” (Lester, 2013, p. 481).

The current study enhances existing literature focusing on how an institution rich with work-life supports influences workplace culture, and how the existence of those policies and workplace culture contribute to the work-family balance experience of mothers in student affairs positions. Choosing institutions presumably rich in work-life policies was an intentional approach to the research design. The two institutions selected for this study were chosen because they had both been recognized for work-life balance on the *Chronicle of Higher Education* list of “Great Colleges to Work For” for the past five consecutive years. A major criterion for being selected for the work-life balance category is the existence of policies that provide employees flexibility on managing their professional and personal responsibilities. Both administrative staff and faculty were surveyed related to existing work-life supports, and institutional culture, in order to determine rankings for the list.

Conclusion

The limited research focused on the work-family balance experiences of mid-career student affairs administrators indicates that the nature of the student affairs position, and the general life circumstances common for those in mid-level positions, both contribute to work-family balance issues (Bailey, 2011; Cameron, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999). The studies outlined in this section are useful because they shed light on the work-family balance challenges of mid-career student affairs administrators in general, but also specifically for those who are mothers. As seen in the

broader work-family balance literature, as well as those specifically focused on student affairs professionals, mothers have greater overlap of personal and work responsibilities than fathers, as they tend to assume the majority of the childcare responsibilities regardless of their work status (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012; Stimpson, 2009; Williams, 2000). Mothers across professional fields have also demonstrated sacrificing their career aspirations to benefit family responsibilities (Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Stone, 2007; Ting & Watt, 1999). Consequently, the present study extends current research by examining if working at an institution known for work-life supports effects the work-family balance experiences of mid-career, female student affairs administrators with children.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the work-family balance experiences of mothers, in mid-career student affairs roles, at one of two institutions known for institutional work-life supports. This particular demographic was selected because the student affairs administrator position has been shown to contribute to work-family imbalance for employees (Bailey, 2011; Cameron, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999), and mothers in mid-career positions are simultaneously experiencing the pulls of parenthood and the pulls of their work role (Bailey, 2011; Cameron, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999). The current study focused on a population who has expressed challenges managing work and personal responsibilities, student affairs administrators who are mothers. Additionally, by targeting participants who worked at institutions known for work-life supports, further insight could be gained regarding the work-family experiences of mothers working in student affairs. Specifically, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do student affairs administrators describe their experiences related to managing work and motherhood, while working at institutions known for their work-life supports?
2. What knowledge do these administrators have of the existing work-life policies at their respective institutions?
3. How do the existing work-life policies influence the perception of culture and norms regarding work-family balance?
4. How does their personal perception of their work-family balance affect the administrator's professional aspirations?

Research Design

In order to answer the research questions, I designed a qualitative study that consisted of semi-structured, in-depth interviews. I chose a qualitative design for this study because I wanted to understand the work-family balance experiences beyond a quantifiable variable. “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. Qualitative research implies a direct concern with experience as it is ‘lived’ or ‘felt’ or ‘undergone’” (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). I wanted to know how administrators, working at work-life balance policy-rich institutions, describe their workplace culture and work-family balance experience, as well as how both workplace culture and their own experience with work-family balance have influenced their career path. A qualitative design allows for a deeper understanding of the process by which people construct meaning and describe what those meanings are (Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

For the purposes of this research, I used a generic interpretive qualitative study design in order to discover, and understand, the lived experiences of the participants in the study. According to Merriam (1998) the most common type of qualitative research is the basic, or generic, interview study, which seeks “to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (p.11). A goal of this study was to understand the lived experiences of a population known for work-family imbalance, student affairs administrators (Fochtman, 2010; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Stimpson, 2009; Ting & Watt, 1999), working in an environment with significant infrastructure to support the work-family balance of employees.

The ideal worker model is used as an initial way to frame participants’ experiences of work-family balance, because most workplaces continue to be organized around an ideal worker,

whose paid work is the only, or at least the primary, responsibility of the employee (Bailyn, 1993; Bailyn et al., 2001; Davies & Frink, 2014; Drago et al., 2009; Williams, 2000). While it is reasonable to assume the workplace culture and norms at an institution known for work-family balance would be different than those created from an ideal worker model, that was part of the phenomena under investigation; how do the existence of work-life policies, influence workplace culture and norms?

Research Site Selection

Identifying institutions that were known for work-life balance among the staff was key in the overall development of this research design. Since 2008, The *Chronicle of Higher Education* and ModernThink LLC have partnered together to administer a survey used to produce “Great Colleges to Work For.” Higher education institutions that are non-profit, with over 500 students, and located in the United States are eligible to participate at no cost to the organization, by committing to the two-part assessment process for a period of two years. The first part of the assessment consists of an institutional audit (The ModernThink Institution Questionnaire IQ) to gather data on demographics, policies, practices and infrastructure. The second part of the assessment is a faculty/staff survey (The ModernThink Higher Education Insight Survey) emailed to a random sample of faculty, administrators, exempt professional staff, and non-exempt staff in lower paying positions (non-exempt staff were included beginning in 2013) to evaluate “people practices” such as compensation, benefits, orientation, training, leadership development and communication strategies. The survey instrument - developed using an existing “best places to work” assessment used in 55 other programs and customized by a panel of higher education experts for issues unique to higher education - consists of 60 statements on a 5-point Likert agreement scale, 18 benefit satisfaction questions on a 5-point satisfaction scale, and two

open-ended questions. Institutions are evaluated on 12 domains, including work-life balance, and information is compiled across Carnegie Classification, Region, Enrollment Size and Public/Private status.

For the present study, the annual survey results for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* list of the “Great Colleges to Work For,” were reviewed to determine if any institution consistently performed highly in the area of work-life balance. In reviewing the data published since 2008, three large institutions (enrollment over 10,000) were recognized for work-life balance between 2010 and 2014. Given the narrow selection pool of the target demographic of this study (female, mid-career student affairs administrators with children), two of those institutions were selected for the purposes of this study in order to ensure a large enough sample to draw upon for data collection. The two institutions chosen, Baylor University and Sam Houston State University, were selected because of their proximity to the researcher. Both are similar in size and number of work-life policies. They were both also subsequently recognized for work-life balance in the 2015 iteration of the study. A brief institutional description and overview of the defined work-life policies listed on the institutions’ human resources websites follows below. There was no intention to compare the institutions on workplace culture or work-life policies for the purposes of this research.

Institutional Descriptions

Baylor University (BU) is a private, religiously-affiliated, doctorate-granting university. It is located in Waco, Texas which has a total population of nearly 235,000. There are just over 16,000 students at BU, including almost 14,000 undergraduate students. Established in 1845, BU is known for its rich history of traditions and commitment to spiritual development. Ninety-nine percent of first year students live on campus, as well as 40 percent of the total undergraduate

population. Additionally, 14 percent of the total population are in a fraternity, and 22 percent are in a sorority. Baylor University also participates as a NCAA Division I, and is categorized by the Carnegie classification as a research university (Baylor University, n.d. a & Baylor University, n.d. b).

Sam Houston State University (SHSU) is a public, doctorate-granting university with a total enrollment over 19,000 students, including 16,000 undergraduates. It is located in Huntsville, Texas, a community with a total population of just over 38,500 people. Sam Houston State University, named after General Sam Houston, who is considered one of Texas' greatest heroes, was established in 1879 as a normal institute. The vast majority of first-year students live on campus (86 percent), with 21 percent of the total undergraduate population living on campus. Only a small portion of the total student population is affiliated with a fraternity (1.7%) or sorority (2.8%), however the total number of campus clubs and organizations surpass 200. Sam Houston State University participates as a NCAA Division I, and categorized by the Carnegie classification as a doctoral research university (Sam Houston State University, n.d. a & Sam Houston State University, n.d. b).

Table 1 provides a summary of the 2013-2014 common data set for both institutions, which was gathered from the respective institutional website. Additional supplemental information from the institutional websites was also included in the table. Those items included are intended to provide insight into the student life culture at each campus, which is a primary concern and focus of student affairs administrators in higher education.

Table 1 <i>Common Data Set 2013-2014 by Research Site</i>		
<i>Baylor University</i>		
Average Age	First-year Full-Time Students	19
	Total Full-Time Undergrads	21
Enrollment	Total Undergrad	13,859
	Total	16,263
Classification	Carnegie NCAA	Research University Division I
Campus Life	% in Fraternities	14%
	% in Sororities	22%
	Clubs and Organizations	260+
	First-Year Students Housed On Campus	99%
	Total Undergrads Housed on Campus	40%
<i>Sam Houston State University</i>		
Average Age	First-year Full-Time Students	17
	Total Full-Time Undergrads	20
Enrollment	Total Undergrad	16,255
	Total	19,210
Classification	Carnegie NCAA	Doctoral Research University Division I
Campus Life	% in Fraternities	1.7%
	% in Sororities	2.8%
	Clubs and Organizations	200+
	First-Year Students Housed On Campus	86%
	Total Undergrads Housed on Campus	21%

Work-Life Policies

A major criterion for being selected for the work-life balance category for the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* “Great Colleges to Work For” is the existence of policies that provide employees flexibility on managing their professional and personal responsibilities. Both BU and SHSU offer well over the average doctoral-granting institution of 1.38 policies (Hollenshead et al., 2005). Table 2 is a brief overview of the defined work-life policies listed on the human resources websites and/or employee handbooks of BU and SHSU. They are grouped into five categories defined in chapter two: time-based, money-based, direct services, information-based, and workplace flexibility (Koppes, 2008; McNamara et al., 2012).

Table 2	
<i>Defined Work-Life Policies</i>	
Time-Based Policies at BU	Time-Based Policies at SHSU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 paid holidays annually • Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) • Court leave • Lactation accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 paid holidays (4 flex holidays) annually • Admin. leave for outstanding performance • Foster parents/parent leave, including but not limited to FMLA • Leave for parent-teacher conferences, blood/organ/bone marrow donations, volunteer firefighter/emergency medical training/certified red cross activity, employees with disabilities, time off to vote • Flex-time for professional development • Release time for on physical wellness
Information Based Policies at BU	Information Based Policies at SHSU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Assistance Program • Health Promotion programs from BCBS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Assistance Program (free counseling services)
Money Based Policies at BU	Money Based Policies at SHSU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% tuition for self/ spouse/children; tuition exchange with 600 institutions • Merit-based scholarship to a full-time staff/faculty child for the onsite school • Health/dependent flex spending accounts • Dining & Bookstore discounts • Cash incentives for physical wellness • Free/reduced athletics & museum admission • Free check cashing • Discounted health center services • 2/3 moving costs for new staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President's Employee Scholarship program • Free membership to campus fitness center • Free admission to home sports games
Direct Service Policies at BU	Direct Service Policies at SHSU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-campus wellness center and programs • Parking at no cost to the employee • Onsite flu shots/Wellness focused website • Childcare accommodations not in policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-campus fitness center membership • On campus smoking cessation and weight loss classes • Childcare accommodations not in policies
Workplace Flexibility Policies at BU	Workplace Flexibility Policies at SHSU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None specified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not in handbook, but exist in payroll guidelines according to study participants
Other Listed Work-Life Policies at BU	Other Listed Work-Life Policies at SHSU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby bear gift to welcome new children • Spiritual wellness/participation in spiritual life office sponsored events encouraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work week, lunch breaks, rest breaks, starting and quitting times are all defined within the staff handbook

Participants

The target demographic for this qualitative study were mothers, in mid-career student affairs roles. Participants were asked to self-identify as a student affairs administrator. Additional participant criteria included: 1) mother to at least one child under the age of eighteen, 2) five or more years full-time experience as a student affairs administrator, but not in the CSAO position at their institution, and 3) employed at one of two identified work-life policy-rich environments for at least one year. The decision to only include those working at their current institution for at least one year was to increase the likelihood of their awareness of the work-life policies and exposure to the workplace culture of their institution.

The final sample for this study consisted of 15 mid-career, female, student affairs administrators, who were parents to children under the age of 18. Eight of the participants were employed at BU and seven at SHSU. Initial contact with potential participants resulted from emailing administrative personnel who reported through the CSAO at each institution. The decision to solicit participation in this manner was because the departments considered student affairs at one institution may not be the same as the other institution. Additional participants, who met the demographic requirements, resulted from others sharing the participation request they were sent with their colleagues.

Procedures

Purposeful criterion sampling was used in order to select information rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 2002). A preliminary review of the administrative personnel who reported through the CSAO at each institution revealed a total of 40 BU employees who as potential participants, and 40 employees at SHSU. Table 3 provides an overview of the departments that report to the CSAO at each institution. Where possible,

departments offering similar services are aligned in the chart. Based on a review of the departmental websites, the gender composition appeared to be equal at BU with 20 female and 20 male student affairs administrators. At SHSU, more females (25) than males (15) appeared to be in mid- to senior-level student affairs roles.

Table 3	
<i>Departments Reporting to the Chief Student Affairs Officer</i>	
<u>Student Life at BU</u>	<u>Student Services at SHSU</u>
Counseling Services	Counseling & Health Services
Campus Living & Learning	Residence Life & Living Learning Programs
Campus Recreation	Recreational Sports
Student Activities	Campus Activities
Student Conduct Administration	Dean of Students
Multicultural Affairs	Student Legal & Medication Services
New Student Experience	Bearkat OneCard Services
New Student Programs	
Spiritual Life & Missions	
Community Based Learning	
Civic Engagement & Educational	
Development	
Business Affairs and Community	
Partnerships	

After receiving IRB approval, I used publically available information to connect with potential participants for the study and did not seek permission from the schools to use their names. A targeted email was sent to Student Life/Student Services administrators at both institutions. This participation solicitation requested individuals respond if they met the demographic criteria (mother, in a mid-career student affairs position, working at their current institution at least one year), and were willing to partake in an in-depth interview related to their work-life balance experiences while working at their present institution. Additional participation requests were sent to administrators who were identified by their colleagues as potential

participants. If I did not receive a response within one week, a second email was sent. Appendix A consists of both emails sent to solicit participation.

In total 48 women were sent an email describing the study and demographic profile. The overall response rate, to the solicitation request, was 75 percent. Of the 36 women who replied to the participation request, 43 percent did not participate in the study. The non-participants included 10 women who indicated they did not have children, four others who were not interviewed because their children were grown adults, three who responded that they did not meet the demographic criteria (but declined to say why), and one declined to be interviewed due to her busy schedule managing family, work, and dissertation research. Additionally, two of the women who were not interviewed had initially agreed to be included in the study. One of these women was excluded because she had only worked in student affairs for approximately one year at the time of participant selection. The other administrator was scheduled to be interviewed on three different occasions, but canceled each time. In the end, she determined her work and family demands were detracting from her ability to participate in an interview and withdrew.

Fifteen women who met the criteria did participate in a one-time interview, which lasted on average 75 minutes. These interviews were conducted over a period of three months, with about half of the women employed at BU (53%) and half at SHSU (47%). All women interviewed had self-identified as a student affairs professional in a mid- or senior-level role (as described in the interview solicitation request), whether their current position fell organizationally within student services (6), student life (5), enrollment management (2) or academic affairs (2). The women worked in a number of functional areas, although nine were either in Student Activities, Student Leadership, or Student Affairs positions. The majority of the

participants held the title of Director/Executive Director (7) or Assistant/Associate Director (4). Additional demographic details about the participants can be found in Chapter four.

Interviews

Once research participants were identified, they were contacted via email to schedule a face-to-face or phone interview. In total, nine of women were interviewed in person, and six via phone. All participants had the opportunity to select a meeting location of their choice and the majority chose their departmental office. The interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and were recorded with the permission of each of administrator. All of the women were given a randomly chosen pseudonym for the purposes of confidentiality. An informed consent statement was also signed by each participant. Table 4 provides an overview of each participant's administrative division and interview type, organized alphabetically by their pseudonym.

Table 4			
<i>Participant Overview</i>			
<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Institution</u>	<u>Division</u>	<u>Interview</u>
Beth	SHSU	Student Services	Face-to-Face
Carrie	SHSU	Student Services	Face-to-Face
Christina	SHSU	Student Services	Face-to-Face
Connie	BU	Enrollment Management	Phone
Diane	BU	Student Life	Face-to-Face
Heather	BU	Student Life	Face-to-Face
Jamie	SHSU	Enrollment Management	Phone
Katharine	BU	Student Life	Phone
Lisa	SHSU	Student Services	Phone
Marie	SHSU	Student Services	Face-to-Face
Megan	BU	Academic Affairs	Face-to-Face
Melissa	BU	Student Life	Face-to-Face
Natalie	BU	Student Life	Phone
Sharon	BU	Academic Affairs	Phone
Tina	SHSU	Student Services	Face-to-Face

The student affairs administrators in this study were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide (Patton, 2002). Using an interview guide helps focus the interview so that all

participants experience similar lines of inquiry, but allows for the flexibility of a conversational approach. For the purposes of this study, the interview guide (Appendix B) was focused on the goal of the overall research questions: understanding participants' knowledge of existing work-life policies, description of their work-family balance experience, and perception of the institutional culture and norms related to work-family balance at their current institution selected because of its work-life policy-rich environment. In order to test the effectiveness of the interview guide, a pilot interview was conducted with a student affairs administrator who met the demographic qualifications to be a participant, but who was not a student affairs administrator at BU or SHSU. As a result of that interview, the questions were reordered and an additional question was added to provide an opportunity for participants to define work-family balance and their perception of their own work-family balance. The 15 administrators were encouraged to speak openly and asked to expand on their responses when relevant. When the responses of the women naturally lent themselves a direction other than the planned order of the interview guide, questions that were initially skipped were revisited later in the interview.

Data Analysis

All interview data were transcribed verbatim by the researcher and input into QSR NVivo 10 to be inductively analyzed using the procedures outlined by Strauss and Corbin (2008) for open, axial, and selective coding procedures. Transcripts were read and reread to form an initial set of codes from the interviews, referred to as open coding. QSR NVivo 10 software also provides a means to quickly run analysis for word frequency, a participant summary, and a matrix coding to show commonality among participants with regards to themes. The software was used in conjunction with Excel to track various response counts related to work-life policies used or other participant data. The preliminary codes helped categorize data in terms of themes.

Axial coding was then used to identify and interpret the relationships between the initially identified themes and sub-themes (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). In total, there were initially over 70 different codes used to organize the various themes, and micro-themes that emerged from the interviews. This process helped provide focused ways to describe the work-family experiences of the women, through trends that emerged across the interviews.

Additionally, confidentiality was an important concern. The participants shared information about their current work-family balance experience working at an institution known for work-life supports. In order to ensure they feel comfortable talking openly and honestly about both positive and negative experience, efforts were made to conceal identifying information in the data summary. Strategies for ensuring the protection of identity included, interviewing participants at two institutions, using pseudonyms for the participants, and using discretion on how I shared their stories, particularly as it relates to identifying material they shared in their direct quotes.

Trustworthiness of the data were established in several ways. Interviews were conducted with participants working in various student affairs roles, at one of two institutions, so the findings are not limited to the work culture and employees of one department or a single institution. As is customary in qualitative research, interviews were conducted with participants until saturation was reached (Patton, 2002). Consistent with member checking procedures, all participants were provided an electronic copy of their transcript and given an opportunity to provide necessary additions or feedback as it relates to the interview content. One participant shared additional content as a result of the transcription and one other provided edits. Additionally, two participants were contacted by the researcher for clarification purposes as it related to their initial interview. Both participants responded with the requested information.

Role of the Researcher

As a researcher it was important for me to be aware of the multiple identities I brought to the research process. I am a married, European American, student affairs professional with two children under the age of five. I am currently mid-career and employed in a mid-level position at a community college in Southeastern Texas. My interest in this topic emerged out of my own experiences managing work-family balance before and after marriage, and before and after becoming a parent. For 10 years, my professional career took place at a single institution, primarily within residence life. I can distinctively recall conversations among my colleagues regarding our varied experiences with work-family balance and our opinions regarding appropriate boundaries between our work and personal roles. Some of these colleagues had similar role commitments as I did and others had different obligations. When I took a role at a new institution – consequently at a new institutional type and within a new administrative area – I was exposed to a new workplace culture and institutional policies. My experience in this position has brought greater awareness, on my part, to the concept of work-family balance and how environmental workplace factors influence the nature of the student affairs administrator role.

As a researcher, my identities also served to benefit the research process as I had a keen ability to personally connect with the participants, which helped me easily build rapport as they shared their experiences. However, I also was aware that my identities and experiences may bias how I understand and code the content being shared by participants and therefore, it was important to recognize that my world view and diversity dimensions could create potential blind spots in the qualitative research process.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, qualitative research can be difficult to generalize to the larger population. The experiences of these women, working at one of these two work-family balance policy-rich institutions located in the southwest region of the United States, may not be generalizable to policy-rich institutions in other regions, men, or student affairs administrators without children. Secondly, the quality of this type of research is heavily dependent on the skill level of the researcher. The data collection through interviews is influenced by the researcher's ability and experience. While I have an extensive background in conducting employment interviews, which may have enhanced my ability to quickly build rapport with the women in this study, my experience conducting interviews for research is limited. Additionally, analysis and interpretation are very time-consuming and highly subjective. The results are impacted by my skill level and attitude throughout the process. Finally, interviews can be influenced by the desire of the participant to be consistent with social standards, and in this case, the expected norm of the workplace culture. The social desirability bias could lead respondents to self-censor their actual views or to portray themselves in a more positive light. By identifying and restricting these limitations as much as possible, I can focus on the purpose and richness of the data collected.

Chapter Four

Results

In constructing this chapter, I initially used the research questions to frame the analysis. This approach revealed an obvious overlap in themes across the research questions. When the participants described their work-family experiences (Q1), they naturally discussed their knowledge and use of existing institutional work-life supports (Q2), how those supports shaped institutional culture related to work-family balance (Q3), and how all of these influenced their career trajectory (Q4). As a result, this chapter is organized by the themes that emerged, and embedded within the themes is the relationship to the various research questions.

This chapter begins with a participant overview to highlight the different personal and professional commitments the women managed day-to-day; including summaries of their role as a parent and professional. Next in the chapter is a section focused on the themes that emerged related to balancing work and family roles. This is followed by an overview of the formalized workplace supports the women discussed and the influence of flexible leave policy and practice. This chapter wraps-up with a discussion on institutional culture and concludes with participant recommendations related to workplace supports.

Participant Overview

The target demographic for this qualitative study were mothers in student affairs administrator roles employed at institutions known for their work-life supports. The participants were not asked their race/ethnicity, so that data is not included in any of the descriptive analysis. The majority of women in this study were married (93%), and nearly 30% of the married participants' spouses worked at their same institution (4 of 14). Most of the participants either had one (33%) or two children (47%), with three of the women reporting additional caregiving

responsibilities for other family members. Table 5 highlights some of the family-related participant demographics.

Table 5								
<i>Participant Family Related Demographics</i>								
<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number of Children</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Other Caregiving</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Married	13	86.7	1	5	33	Aging Parents	2	13.3
Divorced/Remarried	1	6.7	2	6	40	Spouse	1	6.7
Divorce/Single	1	6.7	3	4	27			

Based upon an analysis of the data, the 15 administrators in this study could collectively be described as professionally driven and committed to their careers. All participants self-identified as a student affairs professional in a mid- or senior-level role, operationally, these positions were student services, student life, or enrollment services. At the time of the study, two participants were in Assistant Dean/Assistant Vice President roles and nearly 50% were in a Director/Executive Director (7) position. Two-thirds of the women discussed a desire to advance in their profession. Table 6 details information related to participant work-related demographics.

Table 6					
<i>Participant Work-Related Demographics</i>					
<u>Functional Area</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Job Title</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Student Activities/Student Leadership	4	26.7	Director/Executive Director	7	46.7
Student Affairs in Academic Affairs	3	20	Assistant/Associate Director	4	26.7
Student Services	3	20	Assistant Dean/Assistant Vice President	2	13.3
Student Health/Counseling Services	2	13.3	Coordinator/Program Director	2	13.3
Career Services	1	6.7			
Residence Life	1	6.7			
Spiritual Life	1	6.7			

One-third of the women in this study completed one, or more, degrees as a full-time working mother in student affairs. At the time of the study, three of the women were actively pursuing additional education related to their field. Although no one was actively enrolled in a doctoral program, four of the women had earned their doctorate and three additional participants

aspired to complete their doctoral degree in the future. Additional details related to the educational background and interests of the women in this study can be found in Table 7.

Table 7 <i>Educational Interest</i>			
<u>Degree</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Bachelors	Complete	15	100
Masters	Complete	12	86.7
	Future Goal	2	13.3
	In Progress	1	6.7
Doctorate	Complete	4	26.7
	Future Goal	3	20.0
Other Education	In Progress	2	13.3

In addition to their academic aspirations, the women in this study were active participants in their own professional development. The professional activities the women were involved in outside of their defined work responsibilities is outlined in Table 8. Two-thirds of the participants shared that they regularly attended professional conferences that required travel and time away from family. Forty percent regularly taught at least one college course, two-thirds of whom did so in addition to the scope of their job responsibilities. Three of the women explicitly discussed their active involvement with professional organizations, which included serving in leadership roles in one or more organizations.

Table 8 <i>Professional Activities Outside of Defined Work Responsibilities</i>			
<u>Activity</u>		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Conference Attendance		10	67.7
Teach College Course(s)	outside Scope of Position	4	27.7
	within Scope of Position	2	13.3
Leadership Role in Professional Organization		3	20

It is worth noting that, in addition to their work and family roles, the women discussed various other personal priorities that required dedicated time. Table 9 provides an overview of these other personal commitments. Just over half (53.3%) of the women discussed exercise and

their own physical wellness as a personal priority. Participation in church, or church related activities (40%), and friendships (33.3%) were also two commonly discussed priorities for the participants. Nearly half (46.7%) of the women said their kids' activities were a personal priority for them, which speaks to the importance placed on their role of mother. Although their kids' activities could arguably be considered a family-related commitment, it is included in Table 9 due to the high frequency it was discussed.

Table 9		
<i>Personal Priorities</i>		
<u>Expressed Personal Commitments Requiring a Time Commitment</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Exercise/Wellness	8	53.3
Kids' Activities	7	46.7
Church	6	40
Friendships	5	33.3
Community Service	3	20
Actively Pursuing Additional Education	3	20

Caregiving and the Primary Caregiver

In an effort to better understand the lived experiences of the student affairs administrators in the study, the women were asked to describe the two areas of responsibilities that they all had in common, work and children. I begin this section with what they shared about their parenting responsibilities to provide insight into the family lives of these student affairs professionals. The first theme discussed is "Partnership Approach to Parenting." It is followed by a section on "Assuming All or Most of Caregiving Duties as a Parent" and "Evolving Roles as Parents." A final theme that is discussed in this section is "Caregiving for Adult Family Members."

Partnership Approach to Parenting

In describing what it meant to be the primary caregiver, the women described responsibilities such as: transportation to and from school and other activities for their children; laundry, dinner, and other household duties; and, being the primary go-to when their children

were ill. Although two-thirds of the participants described themselves as the primary caregiver for their children, 87% indicated it was a shared responsibility. Initially, three themes emerged (60/40 split, 50/50, Evolving Roles) to describe the shared parenting roles the majority of the women discussed; however, upon further review, the stories that comprised each of those themes were really about a partnership approach to parenting regardless of how those responsibilities were shared. As such, the sub-themes have been grouped under the theme of “Partnership Approach to Parenting.”

60/40 Split. Eight out of 15 of the women described the role of primary caregiver as nearly even split, with themselves assuming slightly more parenting duties than their husband. For example, Tina said, “We pretty much have to team up for everything since we’re both full-time working professionals... [But] I’m the one who drops them off and picks them up from school every day and gets all their stuff ready and reads all the notes from school. You know, all that kind of stuff... If the kids get sick, I’m usually the one to leave, the one who’s more flexible to be able to go and pick them up or attend to matters.” The women who expressed a 60/40 split approach to caregiving duties indicated that when their husbands were available, they assisted with the day-to-day responsibilities and served in roles such as coach to their children’s athletic team. Jamie’s comment exemplifies a typical husband related comment in a 60/40 split approach. “I have a great husband... by all means he is very actively involved in what [the kids] do and how they are doing.” Although her husband traveled for work weekly, she shared, “our kids are involved in soccer and he is the coach. He does soccer practice with them on Monday nights and tries not to head out of town until Tuesday.” Overall, the women in the 60/40 Split group acknowledged and appreciated their partner for the role he played in their family dynamic, while also conveying they assumed more of caregiving duties than their husband.

50/50. One-third of the administrators in this study described the role of primary caregiver as evenly split between themselves and their husband. Those who described a 50/50 approach frequently used words such as “equal,” “egalitarian,” or “50-50” in describing caregiving responsibilities in their household. For example, Katharine stated, “my husband and I would say we are both egalitarian; we will share the duties and responsibilities. It is not all on one person and we are completely on the same page with that...we both work together to make it work.” Similar to the 60/40 Split group, the 50/50 group described caregiving for their children as a shared responsibility between themselves and their spouse. The 50/50 group, however, conveyed a sense that the ownership of caregiving tasks were evenly split and defined. As Lisa shared, “on a typical weekday, I get my son up, and I take care of him, and my husband takes care of the dog and makes sure that he’s taken care of. In the evening, my husband, depending on what time he gets home, he may be the one cooking and taking care of my son and making sure he’s getting his homework done. I mean it’s very much a 50-50.” Well-defined tasks allowed for duties to be easily shifted when either spouse had evening or weekend commitments outside the home.

Assuming All or Most of Caregiving Duties as a Parent

Connie was the only single parent among the participants in this study. She indicated that she assumed the majority of caregiving responsibilities for her son currently, as well as when she was married. Natalie was unique among the married participants who indicated they were the primary caregiver, in that she assumed nearly all caregiving duties for her children. “I would say it’s probably 75/25, just because intuitively I know what needs to be done. I am always responsible for meals and that sort of thing...what needs to be taken to daycare in terms of like extra clothes or diapers or wipes...I take the girls to all of their doctor appointments. [My

husband] does laundry, that's a big help. And he does our oldest [child's] bath time.” Connie and Natalie assumed all, or nearly all, of the caregiving responsibilities for their children, which was a part of their daily norm. For a few participants, there were times they also described themselves as the sole caregiver, but those circumstances tended to be situational and are discussed in greater detail in this next two sections.

Evolving Roles as Parents

Four out of 15 participants specifically discussed how the role of caregiver had evolved over time, while also highlighting that they generally had a shared approach to parenting with their spouse. Melissa said, “Until recently, I was wrapping up my PhD, so alongside everything else I was doing, I was also studying. And so he took much more of the day-to-day kind of, hands-on work. And at this point, he's wrapping up his PhD, so I tend to be a little bit more hands-on.” When discussing evolving roles, it was less about ownership of weekly caregiving commitments varying due to daily circumstances, and more about those responsibilities shifting due to isolated life events such as completing an academic degree, taking on a new professional role, or the arrival of a new child. Five of the women who had a child in the last two years, and three others with school-aged children, discussed how caregiving roles were different now than when their children were very young. For example, Heather shared that once she returned to work after maternity leave, the division of parenting duties needed to be adjusted in her household:

When I first started working again, it definitely felt like if my son was sick, the expectation was that I was going to take off and take care of him. Part of that's because I feel like as a mother sometimes you jump to him first and say I'm going to do that. So maybe I helped contribute to that disconnect... We just needed to have a conversation

about who is best able to take off that day and it needs to be a little more balanced...he didn't realize that's how I felt...so it was just a communication thing.

Eight of the 14 married women discussed how their husband's work schedule impacted the distribution of caregiving responsibilities. For example, four of the women indicated there were seasonal periods (such as fall) that they took on more of the caregiving duties because their husbands' worked extended evenings, weekends, or traveled during those time. A sentiment shared by Sharon was similar to others in this group. "I feel like my husband and I, we really try to be equal players in the game...Recently, because of what's happening in [his work role] I feel I I've been kind of the primary caregiver...I'm the one who's picking up all of the girls and I'm the one spending all weekend with them when he has events, so I think I kind of feel like the primary caregiver [during those times]."

Caregiving for Adult Family Members

While all of the participants had caregiving responsibilities for their children, three participants also discussed the effect of providing care for adult family members on how they approached managing their various responsibilities. All three of these women shared that in the context of their family member's illness, they took on additional roles which included providing aftercare support for medical treatments, taking on responsibilities their family member traditionally fulfilled, and finding ways to spend additional time with that person during their illness. For example, Carrie's parents played a significant role in providing childcare for her two children, moving next door and providing daily after school care for them. When Carrie's parents fell ill, she not only took on caregiving responsibilities for her parents, but also lost a care provider for her two children. Once her mother went into a care facility, Carrie shared that, "I would go every day on my lunch hour, but I would take an extra hour, so it would be two hours

in the middle of the day. I tried every day to meet with the doctors for my mom...and then I'd stay a little later [at work] at night to make sure I got stuff done or whatever." Carrie's commitment to supporting her parents required her to shift work responsibilities which resulted in her husband taking on additional caregiving roles with her children when she stayed later at work.

Role of Student Affairs Administrators

Nearly 75% of the administrators were either in a Director/Executive Director position (7) or Assistant/Associate Director role (4). Review Table 5 in Chapter 3 for more information related to participant work-related demographics. Overwhelming, the participants shared a commitment to their professional role and students at their institution. For example, Melissa's commitment to the students on her campus, and drive to excel professionally, resulted in her working 1-2 nights a week on campus, as well as most weekends, in addition to normal business hours. "It's very typical that I think come back to campus...I think to do the kind of work I do, to build the kind of relationships and advocate for students, means being present. And so if there's an event on campus that starts at 8:00pm or 7:30pm, I want to make sure I'm back for it."

Although schedules varied among the participants, the majority described their typical workday as starting between 7:30-8:30am and ending between 5:00-6:00pm. That said, the majority also described working on campus, after hours at least one night a week, and attending campus events related to their role approximately once a month. Seven of the women worked on campus in some capacity three to four weekends a month during their peak seasons, with three of those women doing so throughout the fall and spring semesters. As Heather explained, "when you're working with students' schedules, often times that means nights and weekends." A few of the women were able to start their workday later as a result of the nature of their role, only

starting their workday at 8:00am if a meeting was scheduled for them at that time. As Megan shared, “my students aren’t going to come into my office any earlier than 10:00am and that’s who I need to be available for...my hours are definitely more evening centered.” For Megan, her later workday was a result of her frequent work commitments after 5:00pm. “Usually I’d say we have about two programs a week, maybe three....We do a lot of weekend work, especially Sunday night...I probably am working Sunday night three out of four weekends.

Other work responsibilities described by the administrators included things such as supervision, departmental planning, budgets, instruction, development of students, coordination of resources, and planning or facilitating events. For Katharine, work also included responding to campus crisis, “sometimes in the middle of the night I get a text or phone call because [staff] is letting me know that someone’s in the hospital or someone died, sometimes I might have to take a phone call like that.”

Juggling Act of Work and Family

The various night and weekend commitments that came with the student affairs roles described by the women led to a juggling act for some in managing work and family responsibilities. The description of a typical day by Sharon and Marie together provide a good representation of the daily routines of the women in this study. Sharon typically starts her day around 6:30am. “I don’t ever get [to work] before probably about 8:45-9:00am. Then I have to leave at 5:00pm to pick up my kids...sometimes I have programming that happens at night, so depending on what that programming is, I stay up here and my husband and I coordinate picking up [the kids]...sometimes I work through my lunch break. Sometimes I work late at night...I work at home every night after all of my kids go to bed.” Sharon also indicated that she’s still figuring out the new routine, since returning to work after the birth of her third child.

The typical schedule Marie described truly reflected a sense of weaving in and out of work and family commitments:

At 5:30am you get ready. By 6:30-6:45, I'm doing laundry, I'm loading the dishwasher, making sure my daughters have their lunches packed, out the door at 7:05am, drop her off at school. I'm usually here about 7:30-7:35am...lunch is very random, meaning that it could be something I need to take from 10:30am-11:30am, depending on my own errands or things my daughters need. Every Monday I take my lunch from 2:45pm-3:45pm and the reason I do that is because my youngest has to be picked up...she eats in the car, we go over what her homework might be...then she goes into dance, I come back to work....I just try to fit everything in and it's just a fine oiled machine in order to get everything in.

While each of the women in this study had their own unique family dynamic, and experience within the workplace, 87% felt they had family and workplace supports enabling them to manage competing responsibilities. The following section outlines the themes that emerged related to the strategies used by the participants to support their work-family balance. It begins with a section on "Blurred Boundaries," followed by "Controlling How Their Time is Spent," and concludes with a section on "Making Strategic Choices. Each of these main themes is embedded with sub-themes.

Blurred Boundaries

For some of the participants in the study - rather than restricting work tasks to their physical work location, and family time to off-campus locations - the women blurred boundaries, allowing work to creep into personal time, and family to creep into work time. By accomplishing work beyond the boundaries of campus, the women were better able to manage their day-to-day

responsibilities at work. By incorporating their families into their work environment, the women could spend time with their families while still having a presence on campus. For some, spending family time on campus helped their families integrate into the campus community.

Work blurring into home. The technology systems in place today provide access to work responsibilities such as email, data management systems, and other online tools 24 hours a day. These tools make it possible to work remotely, or effectively leave work for the day without work stopping. All 15 of the student affairs administrators in my study confirmed that they completed work tasks outside of work, such as checking and responding to emails or completing other tasks after leaving work for the day. Marie, for example, used downtime during her children's activities to manage work responsibilities from her phone. "If I'm sitting there waiting for my daughter at dance class - you know dance class is running late and I've pulled up and I have 5 minutes to sit and wait for her - I will go through and check my email. I usually don't respond, but it gives me an idea of what's coming, tomorrow."

Interestingly, when asked where they completed their work responsibilities many of the women did not initially perceive that their work overlapped with their family time, not acknowledging accessing email or other tasks remotely without being specifically prompted. Natalie's comment represents a sentiment expressed by the majority of the women related to completing work tasks beyond work hours. "There is no clear delineation between my workday and my home life...realize that when I'm responding to emails at home on the weekends and in the evenings, working on presentations from home, that's actually work. I never thought of this as my work-life creeping over in my personal life and I really honestly don't mind doing that." She went on to share, "I probably respond to work emails every single day, on the weekends as well. In the evening, it probably doesn't take up a huge amount of time. I'm really efficient, so it

doesn't feel like a burden and when I'm just going to respond to this [email]. It's less stuff for me to try to squeeze in on Monday." The fact that Natalie did not mind reviewing and responding to email after business hours was a sentiment expressed by nearly every participant.

For most of the participants, technology was seen as a support structure that provided a means to accomplish work beyond the boundaries of the workplace. However, for four of the women it was a barrier, making them more accessible to campus leadership, staff teams, and students. For example, a shift occurred regarding the expectation to respond to emails outside of business hours when Carrie's new supervisor responded to email while on her own vacation time. "Fifteen years ago, 20 years ago, my boss is on vacation, oh well, we just had to deal with it until he came back. That's just not the case anymore...I have been on vacation and had to answer work emails."

Home blurring into work. For some of the women, the acceptability of children on campus, and even in the office, perpetuated an institutional value of "family first." As noted by Megan, "We are just very family centric...I've never had faculty, or staff, tell me it's weird to bring their kid on campus. It's just not." She went on to say that because some staff and faculty lived on campus, their families were naturally a part of campus culture. "Because they have hall directors and faculty-in-residence who live in the residence halls, I just feel like campus culture has children around campus all the time, and family members, so it's pretty normal." She went on to share that not only is it common to see staff and faculty with their children on campus, students also frequently interacted with staff and faculty off campus.

Connie also discussed interacting with students beyond campus boundaries. "I really believe in engaging with students outside of the classroom...Once a month I have students over to my home for a potluck meal where we can talk about whatever they want...Or they all live in

a living learning community together, so if their dorm has an event, they'll invite me and I'll try to stop by. I can bring my son to some of those things on weekend." By blurring boundaries Connie was able to demonstrate a commitment to her son and students simultaneously.

Many of the women in this study discussed integrating their family into campus life through their participation in campus events, by sharing meals in campus dining facilities with them, or even bringing their children to work with them when they had no other childcare option. Several of the formal policies on campus, including discounted tickets to athletic events, access to campus recreation facilities, and dining discounts, helped incorporate their families into campus culture and provided opportunities for them to connect with their family within the context of the campus environment. Nine out of 15 participants (60%) utilized the free admission to home sporting events. While most of the administrators did not specifically reference this benefit as a means to support work-family balance, Melissa shared it was a way to incorporate her family into the campus culture and help them adjust to their new community. "My kids love sports. They love to go the games. They didn't want to be [living] here, so having free tickets to the games kind of helped integrate them into the campus environment. They love being here now."

A unique benefit for the staff working at BU was an opportunity for discounted rates at the campus dining centers. Seventy-five percent of the women I interviewed at BU mentioned the dining benefit as something they valued as a cost savings benefit for their family. A common sentiment of the BU participants was, "It's cheaper than going to the grocery store, so we take advantage of that. Going to eat at the dining halls is super cheap and then kids are free under six, so six bucks for dinner for all [five] of us is pretty awesome." For others, the dining benefit was a way to incorporate family life into work-life. "We actually eat on campus once or twice a

week, and that's one of the ways in which we kind of balance work-life. If I don't have time to get home to eat with the family, they'll come here."

Controlling How Their Time is Spent

The ability to have control over how their time was spent was a key factor in feeling successful in managing both work and family among the women in this study. For example, when an administrator chose to spend time outside the workplace on work responsibilities, or had the freedom to accomplish personal tasks while at work, they expressed more positive sentiments about their ability to manage work and family roles. The participants discussed various ways they owned, and organized, their time that resulted in sub-themes. These subthemes included the "Management of the family schedule," "Letting go and shifting priorities," and "Double dipping – socializing and friendships."

Management of the family schedule. One control mechanism a number of the women discussed was creating and maintaining a family calendar. Of the eight married women who referenced using a family calendar to manage their work and family commitments, all of them owned the responsibility of managing the calendar. For example, Sharon and her husband shared their work calendars. By incorporating their family activities into their calendars, all commitments were centralized in a single location. "He and I are constantly using our Outlook calendars to negotiate our schedules. We talk about it too, obviously, but those calendars are a reminder who's picking up who today." Sharon went on to say, "I'm always the one who's putting the school schedule into our Outlook calendars and inviting him, I'm putting the [kids] soccer games into the schedule and inviting him... When there are complications, we talk those out." In general, although their husbands were willing to take on the responsibilities delegated to them, they did not take ownership over identifying tasks that needed to be completed, potential

schedule conflicts, or proactive approaches to accomplish daily tasks. This left the women in charge as a manager at work, and at home.

Letting go and shifting priorities. Several participants highlighted a time in their life that led them to examine their personal and work priorities which led to them, followed by letting go of responsibilities that did not fulfill those priorities. Two of the women discussed how shifting work responsibilities to others afforded them more family time, while three women shared ways they let go of personal commitments to accomplish this same goal.

Letting go at work. By finding ways to delegate work responsibilities, the women were able to reduce their workload and refocus their time spent at work. For example, when Tina identified administrative tasks that others could take off her plate, she had more time to focus on big picture, departmental objectives. The difficulty of letting go at work was a challenge discussed by several of the administrators. Diane, a self-described reformed workaholic, reflected the sentiments of many. “I’m wired to just work and to receive my significance from being a good worker.” She went on to share that “good worker” image was shaped by her professional role models. “I have worked for some workaholics and so I saw that as a way to make them happy, and to be seen as good worker, and I didn’t see what their family life was like...Then I realized it’s hard to keep all of this up, trying to be there for my family too.” It was apparent throughout Diane’s interview that she placed great importance on her role as leader within her department, and institution, to model work-family balance to others. One way she did that was by creating a staff team that could share in work commitments that occurred beyond 8:00am-5:00pm, and then personally letting go of her need to be present at every event hosted by her department. Diane said, “I need to set a good example not only for my family...and I also

need to provide a good example for my staff, so that they don't see me working every day and think that's what they need to do as well."

Letting go at home. Some of the participants chose to reduce, or eliminate, their involvement with existing personal commitments. Tina and her husband had spent up to three hours weekly doing volunteer work in the community. After the arrival of their first child, "We just weren't having enough family time together and we knew we had to let some things go...I think that I would go back and [volunteer] again when the girls get older." The organization they gave time to was no less important to them; however, for Tina, she felt taking a break from that commitment, as well as stepping down from a leadership role in an organization she was involved in, would help her have more time with her family.

A family member's illness triggered a shift in how time was spent outside of work for two of the participants. Jamie was actively involved in several leadership roles within her local community when a family member had a health concern arise. "I decided why am I doing all this? Why am I getting babysitters and paying all this money and spending all this time for what? So I decided to stop...I just stopped pretty much all of it." When Heather's family member fell ill, she examined all of her commitments - which included family, work, and school - to determine what she could let go in order to take on additional caregiving responsibilities for that person. Rather than stretching herself too thin, she let go of her school commitment, "I immediately just dropped out that week. I couldn't. I knew we had a long road ahead of us and that was priority that needed to be put on the back burner."

Double dipping – socializing and friendships. Double dipping was a phrase coined by Melissa, when she described a method of utilizing one priority to satisfy multiple commitments.

Melissa incorporated friendships into opportunities for her to have a physical presence on campus. She shared that she and her husband, “really try to have friends,” and went on to say:

If there is one area of our life that I would say is suffering, or lacking, it would be that kind of friendship area. Our time is either consumed with school, or work, or children, or each other. Even just finding time for each other is difficult enough... We tend to be friends with people who I work with, so that we can double dip with the time. It’s easy and I can say, ‘look I’m going to go to the basketball game, do you want to join us?’ Which isn’t necessarily the same thing as selecting people who you are genuinely interested in.

Five of the women discussed utilizing community service roles as ways to build or maintain friendships. Sharon shared, “I think my involvement in [service organization] has been good to help connect with other women outside of [work].” She also found a way to double dip to serve her children’s interest in soccer and her desire to use her time efficiently. “The two older kids play soccer. They’re actually on the same team even though they are two years apart.” Double dipping allowed her kids to participate in soccer, without requiring additional time commitments that would come with two weekly practice times and games.

Megan was one of six women who discussed building and maintaining friendships through her church group, allowing her to fulfill both her spiritual and social interests simultaneously. “Once a month we have a beer night and everyone gets together and just plays games, and hangs out, and talks about philosophy and things like that.” The social support of friendships was important to Megan. In addition to the time she and her husband spent connecting with friends through their church group, she met weekly with a group of women she had met at church. For all of the women who discussed double dipping strategies, connecting

with others was a need met through their participation in something else, or by incorporating other priorities into opportunities to connect.

Making strategic choices. The women were asked to discuss how their family responsibilities affected their career choices and future plans, as well as how their experience working at their current institution influenced those same things. Family was the top priority expressed by the participants in this study, and most of them also felt their institution fostered an attitude of “family first.” Satisfaction regarding the work-family dynamic was reflected in the number of women who wanted to remain working at their current institution. Nearly all (13 out of 15) of the women were happy to stay employed at their current institution either in their current role or a higher position, if presented. One-third of the women indicated that their professional goals would likely lead them to leave the institution. Two participants planned to leave their institution as a result of their dissatisfaction with work-life supports. Several sub-themes contributed to the strategic decision making of the women in this study. First, “Family rooted” decision-making is discussed, followed by the “Grass is not always greener – pausing or stopping advancement,” a discussion on “To degree or not to degree,” and concluding with the “Timing of kids and marriage.”

Family rooted. The desire of some of the women to remain at their current institution, and in some cases their current position, was at least partially influenced by their commitment to remain living in their current community. For instance, Jamie shared “this is where I live now, so I want the university to do well, because that means my community will do well. That means there’s more things for my family to be a part of.” She emphasized how things like the athletic events and performing arts “all of these benefits of living in a college town are important to me. I want my kids to be exposed to that.” Nearly 65% of the married participants expressed that their

family was rooted in the community at least partly due to their husband's career. Just over 25% of the women were married to someone who also worked at their institution. Megan discussed how her husband's role in the institution, the arrival of their son, her professional goals, and desire to pursue additional education all influenced each other. "My husband just started a tenure-track position, so his job is just now getting a lot more crazy. I want to level out our family life a bit more before I jump in [to a Ph.D. program]... Since he is tenured, that is a seven-year process which means we're kind of stuck here, in a way, if he decides he wants to keep the tenure. So that makes my life a little bit more complicated in terms of how I want to go about my job."

Two-thirds of the women expressed a personal connection to their community which influenced their desire to remain in the community. Christina's family ties significantly influenced her desire to remain in area. "I'm so deep rooted here. I graduated from high school here, I met my husband in high school... so uprooting all of those things would be super difficult. I am just super comfortable here. I like it here." Christina was also one of the women who discussed that her husband's career influenced her intention to remain at their current institution. Both Christina and her husband played actively contributed to their family operated business. These responsibilities were in addition to her administrator role on campus.

Grass is not always greener – pausing or stopping advancement. Several of the women shared stories of a fork in the road where professional aspirations and personal ambitions were in conflict. Connie stated, "Sometimes you get this great offer for a position and it's everything you ever wanted, but because of your responsibilities to your family, you can't really walk away from the benefits that you currently have to chase your dreams." As she expressed this choice she made, she did not appear resentful about her decision to choose family

responsibilities over a career opportunity, rather grateful for a work situation that allowed her to balance her roles as a mom and professional.

As with Connie, family first was a mantra I heard repeatedly throughout the interviews. For some of the administrators, family first meant pausing in their career while their children were young, but with the full intention of advancing long-term. The women who discussed pausing in their career had job titles from Assistant/Associate Director to Assistant Dean/Assistant Vice President. Ten of the women discussed a desire to stay at their current institution in part because they did not want to give up the flexibility or time off they had for their family. Like most of the women, Sharon placed significant value on working in an environment that recognized employees had responsibilities beyond the boundaries of the workplace. She stated, “I’m kind of like scared to leave Baylor, I love it here, because I’m afraid the next place I go isn’t going to be as supportive as my current situation is, or my last two situations at Baylor. It makes me anxious to think about that.” Three of the student affairs administrators in this study discussed declining job offers because the nature of their current position was so supportive. Christina’s comment was a common sentiment among the women at both institutions, “I’m not looking for a higher-paying job because the trade-off is not worth it to me. They’d have to kick me out because I love it so much here.”

At the time of the study five of the student affairs administrators shared they were satisfied remaining in their current level of position. Three of those women did not discuss a desire to advance beyond their current position. All three were content to stay in their current role for the foreseeable future. As Diane shared “I have no desire to be a dean or vice president and that has been because of what I have observed...I feel like the higher you go then there’s

going to be more expectations to be the face with the suit at different events. At the time of life where my [child] is I don't want to miss [their] activities."

The two other administrators who expressed satisfaction with their current level had both aspired to the Chief Student Affairs Officer role. One of the women felt her decision not to pursue her doctorate a prerequisite of the senior-level position while her children were in school was also a conscious choice to remain at her current level. The other administrator who had earned her doctorate still aspired to the Chief Student Affairs Officer position but was waiting until her children were older.

To degree or not to degree. The decision whether or not to pursue a doctorate was something discussed by 10 of the participants. While three of the administrators have long term plans to pursue their doctorate, Lisa's comments reflect their current feelings about taking that on now. "There's no way I could get a Ph.D. right now and have a kid. There's just no earthly way." When discussing their professional aspirations, parenthood played a role in the decisions of some women to delay their pursuit of additional education. Of the four women who had earned their Ph.D., only one completed the degree in entirety prior to having children. Three others desired to complete their doctorate and discussed uncertainty in their ability to balance work and family commitments while accomplishing that goal. Sharon, who had just returned to work from maternity leave at the time of the study, felt her current work dynamic would be supportive of her academic goals but was not sure if the timing was right to pursue her doctorate. "When I was in the first trimester, when I was sick as a dog, I was like there's no way I could do this thing, I can barely do work and my life...[Now] I don't sleep because I'm pumping or feeding...It hasn't been the right time so I feel like those plans to go back to school have been pushed to the side because of my family...my family is more important than going

back to school right now. But it is something that I really want to do.” Although Sharon felt the flexibility afforded to her in her current work situation was ideal for pursuing her doctorate, she also felt something else would have to give and had not determined something she was willing to sacrifice.

Two of the participants had aspirations at one time to complete their doctorate but had since decided not to for similar reasons to why Sharon and Katharine had not started theirs.

Carrie shared:

At one point in time I was going to pursue my doctorate when [the kids] were smaller. It just, it was not the time in my opinion. And I know people who have done it, got their doctorate with small toddlers and babies but they made some big sacrifices and I wasn’t willing to make those kind of sacrifices...If I’m going to be an Associate VP or VP...it has been made very clear that you need the doctoral degree. That was one of my aspirations to be a VP but it is no longer because I don’t want to take away from my family and I would definitely have to do that.

Although Carrie had aspired to the Chief Student Affairs Officer position at one point, it was not worth the time away from her family that she would sacrifice in order to achieve the academic credential it required. It’s worth noting that Carrie also expressed that she presently felt the most balanced she had ever felt in her current work-family dynamic. Lisa, who also had once desired a Ph.D. and since decided that was not something she would pursue, was the only participant in the study who stated that work-family balance was not a struggle for her.

Strategic timing of marriage and kids. Many of the strategic decisions the women discussed above were family-driven choices that influenced their careers. The timing of when to get married or have children was the primary way the women discussed their career impacting

the choices they made for their family. Four of the women discussed the timing of when to have children in relationship to their work. For example, Carrie's family life was delayed by her career choices. "If I weren't in higher ed. I think we would've gotten married younger I think we would've had children younger." For six years she lived two hours away from her eventual husband which allowed her to be fully committed and focused on her work. In that role, she shared "it was 60 to 80 hours a week and there may have been a few weeks where there were more... I think had I not been in that environment we would've gotten married sooner."

Two of the women made conscious choices not to allow their career to dictate their family decisions. It was a priority for Sharon and her husband to have children as a part of their family dynamic. "My husband and I always knew that we wanted to have a family and that was the most important thing to us so we haven't let career, for either of us, get in the way of starting a family or pursuing a family. When we both kind of felt like maybe we should have another baby, we've just done it. We're like will figure out the rest of it." Although initially Connie had mapped out a plan related to the timing of when she would have children in relationship to her career, she chose to deviate from that plan. "I didn't want to be stuck in a position where I chose my career over having a child and then wasn't able to have a child. I would rather have a child first and figure out what came with that, but that still shows that I am seeing having a kid as a liability. But I would rather be in that position than not have the choice to have kids." Both of these women put their decision to grow their family ahead of their career.

Workplace Formalized Work-Life Supports

One clear finding was that the benefits associated with work-life supports only existed for staff if they had knowledge of their existence and perceive utilization of those supports was permissible. The following section is a discussion of the most frequently mentioned formalized

work-life support policies. They are presented in order of perceived value by the participants, based on how they shared the policies contributed to their work-family balance. Flexible leave related policies would have led this section, however the role played by informal supervisor practice influenced the perceived value so much that flexible leave policy and practice is outlined in the section that follows. As such, general leave related policies leads this section as the most valued type of policies. Next is a section on all policies related to wellness, followed by section related to onsite childcare and then tuition remission. The last three sections highlight the perceived value of a shared leave pool, a section on FMLA, and finally concludes with the lactation accommodation policy at BU.

General Leave Related Policies

In general, there was a great sense of appreciation for the holiday leave which at both institutions provided seventeen paid days off in addition to the leave time accrued for sickness or vacation. The sentiments expressed by Christina mirrored the appreciation expressed by the majority of the women, as well as the perceived value added of this benefit. When Christina reflected on the leave time that came with her position she stated that it was a factor in her decision to continue working at the institution.

One thing I might not have mentioned before [that benefits] my own psychological well-being is the down time that we're allowed here at Sam, which is amazing. I think people sometimes forget and think, 'wow, I could go here and make a bunch more money doing the same thing or a private company.' Well sure you can. Absolutely. You're right...but what am I trading off? Am I trading off the fact that I will now, no longer ever, ever have two weeks sometimes during Christmas paid; that I don't have to work?

It is worth noting that there was one additional institution specific time-based policy discussed by several women. “Administrative Leave for Outstanding Performance” was a benefit at SHSU which provide paid time off in recognition of effort above and beyond what is operationally expected. This policy was included in the list of policies given to participants as part of this study; however, four out of seven participants who worked at SHSU shared they were unaware of the “Administrative Leave for Outstanding Performance” policy which may indicate that it not a well-publicized, or utilized, benefit. The only participant who was aware of the policy shared, “I know leave for outstanding performance exists. We’ve been told before we can use it I’ve just never used it for my staff. Not that they haven’t deserved it, but most of the time we find other ways.”

Wellness

The majority of study participants identified personal health and well-being as a top priority. Beth’s comment portrays the appreciation for wellness related policies shared by the women, “things like the on campus fitness center, the wellness program, I think that that’s a huge thing...not only can we use the gym for free, but three days a week we can get an extra 30 minutes.” A commitment to physical wellness presented itself through the administrator’s use of their lunch hour and/or wellness time to work out by accessing the campus recreation center for personal or family fitness related activities and utilizing health promotion programs. These three areas are described in more detail below.

Physical wellness time. Finding time for fitness was something 13 out of 15 (87%) women discussed as important to them. A wellness time policy that allowed dedicate time to work out within the workday was only a defined benefit at SHSU. Six out of seven of the SHSU participants discussed utilizing the wellness time policy which allowed them to tack on 30

minutes of wellness time to their lunch time or the end of the day to work out either on or off campus. Several participants shared they were also allowed the flexibility to take their lunch at 4:00pm, and with the additional 30 minutes of wellness time, they could leave at 3:30pm to workout. “There’s a lot of times we’ll all take turns; someone will leave at 3:30 and consider that their lunch and wellness time. That makes a huge difference if you can leave work an hour and a half early and go get your running in or run to the gym and workout.” Interestingly, while the women valued the free/discounted access to the fitness center for themselves and family members, they tended to be more focused on having the time available to workout than the cost savings of having access to the fitness center.

Campus recreation facilities. All but one participant at each university (87%) discussed access to the on-campus recreation facilities as a benefit for themselves or their family. Connie shared “I do use the workout center a lot. On weekends they have family hours where you can bring spouses and children, so my son and I will come swimming in there. It’s an indoor pool so you can go year-round. It’s really fun to do on the weekends.” Melissa also shared that access to the recreation facilities was a huge benefit and way to incorporate her family into her work setting. “For families and for spouses and children, it’s a free membership...we will go there on the weekends sometimes and swim or play racquetball or something like that. Then, during the school holidays...it’s open to them as well and we make use of that. We have had birthday parties there and those sorts of things. That’s a really wonderful benefit [that] hasn’t been afforded to us at other institutions so I would say that’s pretty distinctive and impressive.”

Eight out of fifteen of the participants said they were currently utilizing the free access to the campus fitness center to exercise. Heather shared “I definitely use our free membership at the [fitness center]. I was just there during lunch working out.” When I asked her to consider how

she would incorporate working out into her day without the free access to the on campus facility, she shared, “I wouldn’t. That’s why I have to work out during lunch.” For Heather it may have been less about cost and more about location. She said, she would not fit working out into her day without the access.

Health promotion. In addition to physical wellness time and access to recreation facilities, access to healthy living programs was a benefit discussed by five of the women across both institutions. Diane was the biggest advocate for the wellness programs at her institution. When asked what work-life supports were most the helpful to her, Diane shared, “the health promotion absolutely...I’ve participated in weight watchers, I’ve participated in this other nutritional thing, this other fitness to help encourage us to get involved in fitness activities...those things are really great and I try to help promote them to other people to because I do think they really do help.”

Onsite Childcare

Quality, affordable childcare was a primary expressed concern for the women in this study. At the time of the study only BU had a university sponsored childcare center; however, 60% of the women at both campuses discussed onsite childcare as something they presently were benefiting from (three at BU), had benefited from in the past (one at SHSU), or wanted to participate in (one at BU four at SHSU). With regards to the six women who did not specifically discuss childcare on campus as a benefit, two-thirds had school-aged children at the time of the study and the others did not specifically discuss their childcare provider.

BU’s childcare facility was located a short distance off campus. Three of the eight women had children currently at the school and one of the women was on the waitlist to get her child into the school. The childcare program was seen as high-quality in a city where options for

care was limited. “Childcare or infant care in Waco is hard to come by. Really hard to come by. So the lab school where my older children go to school is one of the most desirable places to go, that people want to have their kids in.” She also shared that they were using a nanny that required a 30 minute drive for pick-up and drop-off for their youngest child who was not old enough to attend the lab school at the time of the study. For this participant it was worth the extra hour each workday to utilize this temporary solution because closer options were not seen as quality choices.

When considering the types of work and personal supports the mothers had in place, one of the participants shared that having “a good child care system” was important in her balance. “When [my son] was at other locations, I wanted to be off [work] as soon as I could to go get him. I did not want him there any longer than he possibly needed to be. And I still would rather be with him than him be there, but at the same time I know he loves it there, and I know he’s learning, and I know his teachers love him, and I know it’s a great environment. So, a really good child care place is very important to us.” For all of the women finding a childcare option that aligned with their work schedule and provided quality care for their children while they were working was an important factor in their work-family balance. The convenience of having that service provided at their work location was appealing, as well as the perceived level of quality that came with a university run childcare.

Tuition Remission

Tuition remission was a benefit at both institutions, but not heavily utilized. In total, only three women at SHSU and one woman at BU utilized this benefit for their own education. At SHSU, staff could receive tuition costs for themselves for any level of course. Marie shared, “I graduated and had no debt. I didn’t have to finance anything, no loans, no credit cards, due to the

employee scholarship program. So I basically went to school for free...I mean you can't get a better deal than that." Out of the remaining two SHSU student affairs administrators in this study, one utilized the funding to cover the cost of her bachelor's degree and the other earned her doctorate while working full-time.

BU staff or their dependents could receive tuition costs for classes towards a bachelors or master's degree. Since the women I interviewed all had children under the age of eighteen, tuition for their dependents was not particularly perceived as a benefit. All of the women I interviewed at BU had a master's degree or higher, so access to earn a bachelor's degree did not have great appeal. In fact, only two of the women discussed benefiting from the tuition remission. One of them had used it while earning her master's degree and working at BU. The other had a husband, a faculty member at the institution, who decided to get a second bachelor's degree.

Two of the BU participants discussed plans to seek their doctorates, but the tuition remission policy at BU would not fund doctorates. "The one thing that I dislike is the tuition remission here...it is kind of annoying that they will pay for you, your spouse, or child for undergrad and grad up to a certain amount, and even the law school, but they won't pay for a PhD...That's probably the one thing I'm really sad about because I think I would really use that. So, I would possibly leave just for that benefit that I don't get here."

Shared Leave Pool

At both institutions, Shared Leave Pool was a mechanism used to support the caregiving responsibilities of parents, or for one's own extended medical needs, by providing paid time-off beyond accrued vacation or shared sick leave. Two participants utilized the shared leave pool to provide paid time-off unrelated to the birth of a child. Both of these participants expressed great

gratitude for the existence of this benefit. Two others utilized the shared leave pool to take paid time off for maternity leave, after depleting their own sick and vacation time. Eligibility and the application process for Shared Leave Pool varied between BU and SHSU, but Human Resources provided an email with instructions on how to donate time to the pool or to a specific person at both. While the Shared Leave Pool solicitation process allowed the requestor to be anonymous, in practice the participants shared they chose to reveal their circumstances in an effort to ensure they would be covered by the Shared Leave Pool. Three of the women specifically discussed the odd dynamic of sharing their personal situation with colleagues to request leave, although they still utilized the benefit. Heather shared, “This sounds horrible because I’ve gotten sick leave, but I feel like you’re dependent on if people like you and want to donate to you...It is awkward and it’s hard to ask people for help and be dependent upon them to give it to you. You might feel more rejected if you don’t get it which might contribute a little bit to the trauma of the situation possibly.”

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Nearly fifty percent of the women discussed using FMLA at their current institution. According to the Department of Labor, the Family and Medical Leave Act, commonly referred to as FMLA, entitles eligible employees to 12-weeks of leave during a 12-month period for five defined reasons, including the birth or adoption of a child and the need for care related to a serious health condition for one’s self or their immediate family member. After interviewing the 15 mothers, one of the biggest insights shared was the lack of knowledge and understanding about FMLA. For example, Sharon stated, “you have to use all of your vacation and sick time if you want to be paid, so I didn’t really understand this when I had my first baby and I had to lean on other moms at Baylor to be like, ‘what I’m I supposed to do?’ and ‘what does this mean?’”

Repeatedly the women shared that, prior to having their first child they did not understand FMLA did not provide them paid time off for maternity leave, nor was it clear that they would have to use their accrued sick and vacation leave to be paid during that time. For example, Natalie's frustration with how FMLA was applied was really about her lack of understanding of how FMLA worked. "If you don't know how to utilize [formalized policies] there's no good and really visible way of figuring out how to navigate them, so that's been a challenge for me particularly with FMLA with my pregnancy." She did not understand that she could request "more than the standard six or eight weeks" off for her maternity leave. "I didn't know that was something that I could advocate for with the doctor or with the University." The limited knowledge about how FMLA was applied in relationship to maternity leave contributed to stress and frustration for several of the women in this study.

Lactation Accommodation

When discussing the existing work-life supports BU had highlighted in their HR policies, the women were happy to see the Lactation Accommodation on the policy list and quick to mention it was something new. Six out of eight of the women discussed it. Overwhelmingly the conversation was not centered on how this new policy contributed to their work-family balance, but how it impacted campus culture. According to the women in the study, the policy had only existed in the last six months for professional staff. When an American University professor nursed her baby while conducting a lecture in 2012, the BU student newspaper wrote "an article on it, like an editorial or something, and stated 'it was so gross. I can't believe someone would do that.' Which obviously launched this big backlash and a lot of people responded to the newspaper... So after all of the stuff in the newspaper is really when all those conversations happened and they created those spaces."

The existence of the lactation accommodation policy created physical spaces and opportunities for conversations. “I definitely would say [the lactation policy] has influenced culture. I feel like Baylor is a very supportive place, but some, especially like the male faculty staff members, are just not aware that that’s a thing. So now it’s more publicized, they are. But I think as a group they would have been supportive if they had known before, they just didn’t.” She felt that the policy “just makes it a little easier to talk about because HR’s been emailing about the policy, so I think it’s on everyone’s minds right now so that’s nice.” A common feeling among the mothers in student affairs administrator roles at BU was that the existence of the Lactation Accommodation policy was not enough, but was a step in the right direction. The thoughts they shared related to the policy were a reflection of the historic and evolving culture of the institution surrounding women in the workplace.

Workplace Flexible Leave Policies and Practice

Flexibility in when and where one works was a major theme throughout all interviews, appearing in relationship to many of the questions the women were asked. All seven SHSU participants and six of the eight BU participants discussed how the culture of flexibility in their immediate department positively contributed to their work-family balance. Although I did not find any policy listed on either institution’s website related to flex-time, one of the participants from SHSU shared that there was one within the payroll policies. Several of the women who worked at SHSU discussed the flexible leave policy and practice that existed in order to recognize hours worked after 5:00pm and on weekends. BU did not have a formalized flexible leave policy, leaving flexible practice to be solely dependent on supervisor practice. In general, the women who felt their work environment and supervisor supported their work-family balance (through flexible schedules, the ability to work from home, flexible leave), were also the ones

who expressed the most institutional commitment. The rest of this section consists of a discussion on “Where Formal Flexible Leave Policies Exist,” “Where Formal Flexible Leave Policies Do Not Exist,” and “The Role of the Supervisor.”

Where Formal Flexible Leave Policies Exist

The flexible leave policy at SHSU provided the student affairs administrator a formalized process that allowed them to shift their normal work schedule to account for late night or weekend work-related activities. One of the participants shared, “we basically keep an Excel spreadsheet...if you’re here for an hour and a half, we put it down. On opening weekend we’re here like 20 hours...between Saturday and Sunday. That’s flex-time we record because clearly we don’t get overtime.”

Several of the administrators at SHSU also shared that they had flexible time for professional development, “when we go to conferences, we don’t take time off or anything that is just part of your work time. And we let our staff go to quite a bit of professional development opportunities, trainings and things like that.” The women who highlighted this benefit appreciated the financial support for their professional development, as well as the flexibility to participate during scheduled work time. Although there was not a formalized policy listed in the BU human resources information, the BU participants expressed similar sentiments.

Where Formal Flexible Leave Do Not Exist

Sometimes the women discussed the lack of flexibility as a frustration, which was more present at BU where there were no formal flexible work policies. The women expressed that they lacked the freedom to count work hours that occurred outside the workplace as a part of their workday and it made the women feel untrusted, which was particularly alarming considering their positions within the organization. For example, one BU administrators shared, “I was

genuinely shocked at the lack of flexibility when I got here. I was accustomed to, if I didn't have meetings on the calendar, I could kind of separate some time on my calendar, being able to work from home. When I first arrived, I just emailed and said 'I'm going to work from home today. One of the kids is sick, I have one meeting and I'm going to call in for it.' The reaction made it very clear that this was not commonly done." After making the decision to work from home that day, additional conversations took place with her supervisor about flexible leave. "There was some pushing and tugging, toing and froing, and eventually we got to the conclusion that on very rare occasions, with preapproved agreement and a list of projects I would be working on, agreed and documented by email, then I would be able to work from home. It's so exhausting. It's not worth the effort." As a seasoned professional, the need to report micro-details of her daily tasks, inability to control her work schedule, or how she accomplished her work, really led her to feel a lack of trust from upper-administration.

Among the eight BU participants, 75% brought up the campus health and wellness committee that had recently been formed. "There's a committee right now that is supposed to be working on student life work-life guidelines because they recognize this is something we want to continue to improve on...one of the things that they were considering is a flexible time for you to work out during your workday. If you had that flexibility you might not even have to use your lunch time for it...and maybe even more flexibility for coming back from maternity leave." Although the BU administrators shared a perception of disconnect between the espoused institutional values favoring work-life balance and the day-to-day practice across the university, there was also a sense of hopefulness that change was on the horizon. "I think putting it into practice, you know actions speak louder than words. I think we're still working on it because the hierarchy just has a stronger work versus family balance. I think they are wonderful dads and

moms, so I don't want that to sound bad, but I do think they might not be as understanding of the family side as I would hope that it would be."

While the women expressed that the creation of the staff work-life balance committee was a step in the right direction, only one of the six women who discussed the committee seemed to have full confidence that the committee would make a positive impact. She also happened to be the only one of the participants who was on the committee. "Some of the things we have talked about, and what I hope we can see some resolution on, I don't know if it will be a policy or some guidelines to help with some flex-time. She shared this was particular relevant for "student life whenever there are activities in the evening - especially in the departments like student activities, orientation department in the summer, campus recreation year-round." Even without specifically defined institutional policies, she said department head may provide flexibility to staff working late night events so they do not need to be at work the next day at 8:00am. The desire behind formalizing flexible practice of supervisor was so that they were "written down as guidelines so even after we leave, those are in place."

The Role of the Supervisor

The participants' direct supervisor was the most commonly discussed support, or barrier, related to work-family balance. Supervisors influenced staff access to established policies, and informal practice varied among the leadership. Beth shared, "I do think that what you get within these units, you have different supervisors, different bosses that have different styles. Sometimes they let their employees do things that other bosses don't let them do...I think it's all within the letter of the law, but it's just a difference in interpretation by that supervisor." The comments that follow in the supervisor flexibility section were equally shared from women at both institutions. Although formal policies were lacking at BU, the influence the supervisor had on the experience

of managing work and family responsibilities may have mitigated the lack of formalized university supports. The discussion in the supervisor inflexibility section were only from BU participants.

Supervisor flexibility. The majority of participants in this study (87%) spoke favorably about their supervisor. For those women who perceived support and freedom to control their work schedule and location, they generally spoke very highly of their supervisor, department, and colleagues. Christina shared that her supervisor “knows that I work long hours throughout the week, so when I need to go to a doctor’s appointment or take a half day off, he’s like ‘you know, just do it. Just do it, because I know that you work hard.’” Another administrator shared a similar feeling in her department, Tina stated, “we just say...when emergencies come up, you just go take care of whatever you need to take care of and then you come back whenever it’s been handled or whatever.”

Four of the seven women who had utilized FMLA at their current institution for maternity leave specifically noted supervisor flexibility related to maternity leave. The comment made by Sharon regarding her experience with two different supervisors, in two different divisions, was similar to what the other four women shared. “My supervisors have been really flexible. They have been like ‘I know that you’re starting back today, but if you want to just work from home for half the day, do that, tell me what you’re comfortable with.’ They have just always been sensitive I guess.” The flexibility their supervisor provided regarding their transition from maternity leave to the work environment supported their work-family balance and was separate from any institutional policy that existed.

By being able to conceptualize a position outside of the typical workday, one of the institutions was able to hire the staff member they wanted while accommodating her personal

needs. Heather was lured out of her role as stay-at-home mom when her request for a flexible work schedule that did not conform to normal business hours was accommodated. “My husband was working nights at the time 3:30pm to midnight and I, we didn’t have childcare for my son. So [the hiring manager] let me come in at 6:00am so I could leave at 2:30pm and get home and have a little overlap time (laughing) before my husband headed to work.” Having an employer who was willing to examine whether the duties of the job could be completed outside of the context of business hours ultimately supported Heather’s entry back into the workforce.

Supervisor inflexibility. “Other managers will let you do things informally...I’m run through this general process of HR and what they would say to anybody. And it is very rigid and rules-based how my boss interacts with me around flexibility, so those are barriers.” Although most participants in this study spoke highly of their immediate supervisor, two expressed the experience summarized in the previous statement. This was reflected in their feelings of frustration with their supervisor and institution. It was also discussed by the women as a barrier to effectively managing competing responsibilities. In both of these cases, where there was no defined policy related to flexibility, the supervisor appeared to approach flexibility objectively treating all staff equally by not allowing flexibility for anyone rather than using subjective professional judgment. For example, one of the more senior level administrators in this study was frustrated with the lack of flexibility and trust she experienced in her role, particularly because of the level of her position and years of experience as a professional. “I would say the job requires a lot more hours, and in order for working parents, but particularly mothers to manage those number of hours, that requires greater flexibility. So if I need to be here until 10:00pm, but I don’t have a meeting until 10:00am in the morning why do I need to be here at 8:00am? Why am I logging in as late? It doesn’t make any sense to me.” She went on to share

that she worked best when she was given tasks to be completed, “but when I’m told here is the things I need you to accomplish, and here are the days and times you need to do them specifically, that for me is unworkable environment. And that’s where we’re very much like where suffocating and the culture here is very much that way.”

Institutional Culture

When institutions are assessed for work-life balance on the *Chronicle of Higher Education*’s “Great Colleges to Work For,” both the number of work-life supports that existed and how employees felt about the workplace culture in terms of work-life balance were examined. All of the participants in this study worked at one of two institutions recognized for work-life balance since 2011. Two common themes that emerged related to workplace culture were the influence of institutional leadership and the role of faith and religion.

Institutional Culture and Leadership

Although the women in this study shared that there were inconsistencies across campus with how work-life supports were practiced, over and over the women discussed how leadership shaped the culture of the institution. On the 2015 iteration of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*’s “Great Colleges to Work For,” a message from each institution’s president is displayed. Those statements are shared here to provide a view from the top of the culture of these two institutions.

Sam Houston State University president’s message: “We place a tremendous amount of importance on creating an atmosphere in which our faculty and staff feel they can succeed. This, in turn, helps us provide a nurturing and fulfilling learning environment for our students and contributes to Sam Houston State University being a great name in education.

Baylor University president's message: "Baylor's mission states clearly the priority we attach to the caring nature of our community. That commitment is reflected in a deep respect for shared governance; appreciation and support for work-family balance; a spirit of generosity in our daily work together; and a firm belief in the value and significance of the contribution of every Baylor colleague."

The SHSU participants repeatedly said that the emphasis on work-family balance in their workplace came from the top of the organization. As one respondent explained, "It's kind of that trickledown effect. Even under two different presidents...it has always been gracious, accommodating, personable, truly interested in their staff, their direct reports and the people that report to their direct reports, all the way down into the organizational chart." One of the ways that message was conveyed by leadership was through developing relationships with staff, beyond their direct reports. For example, one of the administrators shared that she felt comfortable going to the division head because she felt like he knew her beyond the scope of her position at the institution. "He's super supportive, he knows me, he knows my husband...I don't feel like I'm so far removed from him that I couldn't let him know that I needed something. Or if my family needed me." One of the BU administrator's highlighted a divisional practice she felt portrayed a commitment to staff beyond their work role. She shared that another division had "a code of conduct for their particular area of student life and...it's just basic courtesy, but one of the things is 'please no emails on the weekend unless it's an emergency.' And I think it's to honor that rest time. It's a purposeful commitment to letting everyone have rest and time with their family." This departmental practice formalized an expectation of leaving work at work.

Seventy-five percent of the BU participants expressed a disconnect between the espoused values of the institution and the actual experience of some employees. This came from

administrators who felt their own work situation positively contributed to work-family balance in addition to those who did not feel that way. “From my perspective what is espoused as a value is not supported in practice. And so I’ve heard other people say this, ‘You know Baylor is supposed to be a very family-friendly institution and yet this is my experience,’ and fill in the blank with whatever that [contrary] experience is.”

Several of the women attributed the incongruence between what was portrayed and practiced, regarding work and family balance, to the male-dominated upper administration. “I think they want to act like they’re family friendly and they want women to work, but they really prefer you be a single female ...on the deans and department heads level, there are only five...in a division of maybe 17 or 18 that have young children. Everyone else is either a single female or their kids are grown, they’re empty-nesters, they’re grandparents.” She went on to explain, “I feel like you probably wouldn’t schedule an 8:30am meeting if you remember what it’s like to try to get kids out of the house and into school. Maybe 9:00am is more reasonable.” This administrator felt “if you actually heard from the top that you have flexibility, I think that would be good. And we have like a student life committee that’s supposed to talk about work life balance and wellness programs. We are in baby steps, we are in baby steps.”

When those empowered to develop policy and practice had a family dynamic that was different than the mothers in this study (who saw themselves as the primary caregiver, or a caregiver that equally shared that role with their spouse), the women felt it had a negative effect on work-family balance. For example, one of the women who struggled to find balance with her work and personal responsibilities shared that she was the only one with “young children” in her department and the two others who had children, were “both middle-aged, white, males whose

wives stayed home to raise the children.” Due to lack of employee demographic similarity in her immediate department Natalie felt no one else related to her situation.

When policy and practice shapers had a similar family dynamic to the mothers in this study it had a positive influence on work-family balance for the administrators. Typically that occurred when there was a stronger influence of women in leadership. For example, the only BU participant who did not discuss the male-dominant workplace culture at BU did discuss the influence of a female-dominated division. “We are definitely dominated by women, so that brings an understanding about having kids. If you need to go nurse at the daycare, go over on your lunch break... We work really hard, but we are all people who like to work really hard and enjoy that kind of environment.”

It is worth noting that two of the SHSU participants also discussed the positive impact that other working women within the institution had on their workplace culture. One of the administrators had left a corporate job for the university role in order to manage family and work responsibilities. “Our office has always been very small, mostly women. We’re from the south, so we are very helpful and wanting to be very family oriented. I think all of us have kids.” She also said a particular colleague was always flexible on which events he worked in order to support her family role with school drop-off. Another administrator shared that “Three out of five of us have family in my little team that I work in and so family is first.” Over spring break she brought her infant to work. “I couldn’t figure out anyone to take care of her, so she came to work with me all week. She came to meetings and that was okay. That was no big deal.”

Overall, in discussing their workplace culture related to work-family balance supports, the conversations with the women in this study seemed centered on flexibility. While these student affairs administrators appreciated the paid holidays and valued benefits such as free

tickets for athletic events and discounted meals, what seemed to be the primary contributor to, or detraction from, their own perceived work-family balance was the freedom to accomplish work tasks that did not require a physical presence, where they wanted. This really came from the fact that the women were going to complete work “afterhours” – attending campus events, working on projects, responding to emails – and wanted the freedom to choose to complete personal responsibilities during business hours if, and when, it was needed. Some of the administrators had this flexibility and some did not. Additionally, flexibility also meant having the autonomy to choose what tasks were completed when assuming expected deadlines were met. For some of the women this meant taking time off campus, or out of the office, to do very focused, visionary type projects. For other study participants it meant having control over their schedule and not having their personal time co-opted for business on a routine basis. Again, this feeling of control and empowerment regarding their work tasks varied among participants.

The Role of Faith and Religion

Faith and religion had a strong presence in the daily lives of many of the women working at both institutions which may be a reflection of a cultural norm of Texas. This played out in their personal relationships, but also in their workplace. Two SHSU, and five BU, participants discussed attending church and bible studies as personal priorities. In conjunction with their own personal commitment to religion, the BU participants also discussed the influence of a Christian based institution on their workplace culture. This included spiritual guidance as a part of the formally defined policies at BU. While only two of the participants discussed utilizing the formally outlined spiritual guidance offered, seven out of eight discussed the role that spirituality or prayer played in their role as a student affairs administrator at BU. For one of the women the

spiritual guidance she had received since joining the BU team had been one of the most, if not the most, significant work-related factors in her work-family balance:

We have an amazing spiritual life area...that's been something that I've really benefited from. I've always worked at a Christian campus, but at Baylor - and not just for students, but for faculty and staff - the opportunities to gather for prayer or for faculty and staff worship, I love. That helps me and my family for me just to continue and grow in my relationship with Christ and I can feel like I can do that at my workplace...For me to not feel like that part is shut off, but there are opportunities for me to nurture that growth, I've really, really needed that. ...the spiritual encouragement that's here has probably meant more to me than anything.

Another administrator echoed a similar sentiment, "We'll start meetings with prayer which I think gives people space to be a human person. I mean even if you're not religious I think just hearing someone who cares about what's going on in your life it brings an element of humanity to the conversation that I find very refreshing. I feel like we know and care about each other as people on top of respecting each other as colleagues." The women who spoke to spirituality in their workplace felt that this conversation allowed them to integrate more of their personal selves in their professional role which left them feeling cared about in their workplace.

Participant Recommendations

All of the student affairs administrators in this study were asked if there was anything their current institution could improve on or change in order to better support their work-family balance. The majority of responses were related to formalized supports related to flexibility in the workplace. Five of the BU participants specifically referenced opportunities to improve existing policies related to maternity and paternity leave. A typical comment that reflected this

sentiment was “I think it’s really hard when you do drain all of your time, let’s say like, for me for maternity. I come back to work and I have no vacation, no sick time, and then somebody gets sick or you can’t take a vacation until you build your time backup. I just don’t think it’s, it’s not setting me up, or any woman with a similar situation to me, for success... I feel like we can do better.” Four of the BU student affairs administrators in this study expressed a desire for the institution to examine the institutional practices of other universities related to maternity and paternity leave practices.

Additionally, the process for eligibility and requesting leave from the shared leave pool, whether it was to support maternity leave time or anything else, was an area several participants at both institution discussed as an opportunity to improve. Specifically, the women in this study wanted to see more flexibility with regards to employees being eligible to access the shared leave pool regardless of their time at the institution or full or part-time status. Additionally, the perceived need to share their personal circumstance related to their leave request with those they were soliciting time from felt awkward for the women. It’s possible that there are other approaches that would more fully protect privacy of employees in need of shared leave pool.

Another opportunity for improvement was flexibility related to their schedule, particularly with regards to having adjusted or modified schedules to account for the various late night and weekend work commitments that required their time. For example, instead of expecting staff to adhere to strict 8:00am-5:00pm workdays in addition to those additional commitments, they wanted the institution to consider the possibility of a workday that did not start at 8:00am when it did not end at 5:00pm. Since so many of the participants were granted workplace flexibility by their supervisor, only two mentioned this as something they would like

to see for themselves, but an additional four said they would like to see this for their colleagues who did not have the flexibility they were afforded by their supervisor.

The student affairs administrators in this study were committed to their students, their profession, and in almost every case, the institution where they were employed. In exchange for that level of commitment from them, they expected a commitment from their university to allow them the flexibility to manage their work and family responsibilities as needed. This was particularly important because as mothers, family came first for these women. Those administrators who felt their work environment supported them in their commitment to family (through flexible schedules, the ability to work from home, reasonable maternity leave) – were also the women who expressed the greatest commitment to their institution. Additionally, when the women felt they had institutional support for their professional growth (through things such as time off to complete course work or attend professional conferences, financial support to fund educational pursuits or conference travel) they also reflected greater commitment to the institution.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

This chapter is an overview of this study and summary of conclusions as a result of my research. First, a summary of the study is provided. Next, I discuss the major findings as they relate to the research questions. This is followed by a discussion of implications of these findings for institutions and recommendations for student affairs administrators. Finally, I present limitations of the study and directions for future research.

Summary of the Study

This study sought to expand current understanding of the work-family experiences of mid-career student affairs administrators by focusing on mothers employed at institutions known for work-life supports. Using a qualitative research design, the work-family experiences of mothers, who were mid-career and employed as a student affairs administrator either at Baylor University or Sam Houston State University, were examined. These two institutions were chosen as workplace sites for the study because of their recognition for workplace supports on the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* annual list, "Great Colleges to Work For" since 2010. The four research questions that guided this study are restated below:

1. How do mothers in mid-career, student affairs administrator roles, at institutions known for their work-life supports, describe their experiences of work-family balance?
2. What knowledge do these women have of the existing work-life policies at the respective institutions?
3. How do the existing work-life policies influence the perception of workplace culture and norms of these women balancing their career and family?

4. How does the perception of their own work-family balance affect the intended career trajectory or desire for professional advancement of those women?

Major Findings

The following section includes a summary of the nature of the student affairs administrator position as described by the mothers in this study. This includes a summary of the impact their administrator roles had on their management of completing work and family responsibilities. Next, I focus on the work-life policies and practices that existed at the selected institutions in relationship to being family-friendly work environments. This is followed by a discussion on the influence of policy and leadership on workplace culture for these women. Finally, the influence of family-friendly institutions on the professional goals of the participants in this study is discussed.

Mid-Career Student Affairs Administrators and Being a Mom

The fact that the work-family experiences of student affairs administrators is frequently described as imbalanced indicates there may be some cultural norms related to the student affairs position that perpetuate overlap between work and personal responsibilities (Bailey, 2011; Cameron, 2011; Wilk, 2013). This sentiment was confirmed by the participants in this study. What was particularly interesting was that they never took issue with the normative nature of the job, related to the hours spent on and at work. The women regularly spent nights and weekends on campus related to programming, counseling, and supporting students in their college experience. At home they would work on work-related projects or operational planning. For some their work involved responding to student emergencies. While all of the women also described completing routine tasks such as checking emails from their phone after leaving campus for the day, 11 of 15 embraced existing technological supports to conduct work beyond

the boundaries of campus as a means to support their work-family balance. This finding is different than Bailey's (2011) study, where the administrators felt technology was a barrier, making them too accessible to other administrators and students.

The majority of participants in this study did not express a desire to draw distinct boundaries between work and family, in contrast to those in Cameron's (2011) study. In fact, it appeared difficult to set clear delineations between work and family, and instead the women embraced the overlap provided they had the support from work to manage their personal responsibilities that spilled over into traditional working hours. Specifically, 13 of the women felt their time spent on work duties outside of business hours was acknowledged through the flexibility they received from their supervisor to manage their non-work responsibilities however, and whenever, necessary. This was important because consistent with prior research, the majority of these women viewed themselves as the primary caregiver to their children even if their spouse shared in caregiving responsibilities (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Jones, 2012; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012; Spangler, 2011; Stimpson, 2009; Stone, 2007; Williams, 2000).

Work-Life Policies that Support Work-Family Balance

This section highlights the workplace supports that contributed to work-family balance for the administrators in this study. Additionally, the administrators commonly expressed an opportunity to improve some policies or practice, which is also included in this section.

Workplace flexibility. Perceived workplace flexibility, by far and away, was described as the most valued policy and practice related to work-family balance among the participants in this study. A major finding was that the evening and weekend work hours that come with many student affairs positions was not seen as a negative contributor towards work-family balance,

when the women perceived they had workplace flexibility regarding when and where they completed work and family responsibilities. This is particularly important because past research among student affairs administrators has highlighted the challenges of managing competing responsibilities (Bailey, 2011; Cameron, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Spangler, 2011; Ting & Watt, 1999). Most of the women in this study felt empowered with the freedom to choose how, and if, their work and family boundaries overlapped. Research outside of higher education has also shown that employer supported workplace flexibility, providing employees with control over how they manage their family and work roles, positively contributes to workplace loyalty (Dickson, 2008; Ferguson et al., 2012; Kelly et al., 2008; Kossek & Lee, 2008). This also mirrored the attitude of the majority of the women in this study. In fact, 10 of the participants discussed a desire to stay at their current institution, in part, because they did not want to give up the flexibility they had related to managing their family and work duties, highlighting the institutional loyalty that coupled workplace flexibility.

Physical wellness policies. Wellness, time for fitness, and access to exercise facilities were very favorably perceived and valued by the participants at both institutions. This may result from the fact that personal fitness and wellness was an important personal priority among the majority of these women. Nine administrators across both institutions shared they had benefited from the free, or discounted, access to recreation facilities, fitness classes, or other personal health programs offered by their respective institution. Workplace support for physical wellness was perceived as a financial benefit for the participants and their families who, in some cases, also had access.

Six out of seven of the SHSU participants discussed taking advantage of policies that provided time to exercise during the workday, whereas three BU participants had supervisors who provided that flexibility in the absence of a formal institutional policy. This type of support for physical wellness through formal policy or supervisor practice was positively perceived, in part, because it occurred during the time frame in which their children already had care provided. Overwhelmingly, participants who identified personal wellness as a top priority indicated they would not exercise if this opportunity was not provided by their employer.

Childcare. Not surprisingly, the existence of quality childcare played a significant role in the ability to manage work and family. At the time of this study, only BU maintained a university sponsored childcare center; however, 60% of the women at both campuses discussed onsite childcare as a current, former, or desired benefit. Interestingly, the desire for onsite childcare was less about convenience and more about perceived quality of care provided by an institutionally sponsored center.

Family integration supports. Campus supports that encouraged family integration into campus culture had real positive effects on the family transition to, and integration into, the campus and surrounding community among some participants. This included membership to recreational facilities as well as discounted and free admissions to sporting events and other programs. The perceived value of the discounted dining plan for employees and their families at BU was the most surprising work-life benefit highlighted by participants. All of these types of benefits were not only seen as a financial savings to the employee, but also a means to help connect the administrator's family to the workplace. This was of particular importance among these women as they searched for ways to blur boundaries between work and family and fulfill multiple commitments simultaneously.

Tuition remission. BU administrators felt that the tuition remission policy could be improved upon to better support work-family balance. It was clear among the women the restrictive nature of the policy was not seen as particularly helpful. This was, in large part, because the vast majority of women in this study had master's degrees and BU's tuition remission policy, for example, did not support doctoral work. Only one of the BU administrators discussed using the benefit for her own educational advancement. Additionally, although their children could also receive tuition to BU, the participants who discussed that aspect of the benefit felt that college was so far down the road for them that the policy had no immediate value. At SHSU tuition remission was applicable for all degree types and was perceived favorably by the women. In fact, five out of seven of the SHSU administrators personally took advantage of the policy.

Maternity leave. The dialogue among the participants about policies and procedures surrounding maternity leave, including FMLA and Shared Leave Pool, emphasized the need to improve understanding about such policies. This was particularly notable in relationship to paid time-off while on maternity leave. Nearly 50% of the participants shared that they did not realize FMLA did not provide paid time off while on maternity leave. They also did not understand that they would have to use their accrued sick and vacation leave time to be paid while on maternity leave. Several women shared that having other working mothers in their department helped to mitigate the negative effect of their misunderstanding of policies surrounding maternity leave, because they were able to share their experience and provide direction on ways to maximize institutional benefits. Hiring and retaining other mothers in student affairs administrator positions may be a potential mechanism to improve knowledge and understanding of these types of policies among new moms.

Workplace Culture: the Influence of Policy and Practice

Workplace culture is influenced by a variety of things, including existing policies and how those policies are formalized in practice. One value in examining the lived experiences of student affairs professionals balancing motherhood, while working at an institution recognized for work-life supports, was the opportunity to explore whether those supports translated into a family-friendly workplace. The workplace culture described by the participants in this study was described consistently among participants working at the same institution. At both universities the existence of formalized policies to support employee navigation of work and non-work responsibilities did contribute to a family-friendly institutional culture. Individual supervisors, however, contributed a more direct effect on the day-to-day experience of the participants in this study.

Overall, the SHSU participants described their institution as family-friendly and supportive of their overall work-family balance. This was a result of the influence of institutional leadership, direct supervisors, and institutionalized formal policies. Most of the BU participants described their individual departments as family-friendly, and consistently described a culture of leadership that verbalized a workplace supportive of family. They also shared a common agreement that there was a discrepancy between espoused values of the institution and the reality of practice. This was true among participants who felt their specific department was supportive of work-family balance and for those who did not. Discrepancies between values and the lived experience were attributed to campus leadership, but even more so, to the direct supervisor. This finding is consistent with existing research that has shown that existing policies influence workplace culture, but the supervisor influences the day to day to experience of employees (Bailey, 2011; Koppes, 2008; Maxwell, 2005; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000; Stone, 2007; Williams

& Dolkas, 2012). Interestingly, when the women in the present study perceived inequities for others regarding workplace supports, they perceived their institutional culture related to being family-friendly more negatively. This was true even when participants felt personally satisfied with their own work-family balance and personal experience with workplace supports.

The Influence of Family-Friendly Institutions on Professional Goals

This study sought to understand the influence of working at an institution recognized for their work-life supports on the career trajectory of the participants. Although motherhood may have shifted professional and personal priorities, similar to the female student affairs administrators in Fochtman's (2010) study, it did not shift the professional ambitions of the women in this study. Among the fifteen participants, one-third completed one or more degrees as a full-time working mom in student affairs. Thirteen of these women had finished their master's degree and five had earned doctorates. Nine were in positions of director or higher at their current institution and thirteen shared they had a desire to advance beyond their current position. Although several made the decision to postpone or delay professional advancement, the tone of this decision was less sacrificial than the tone expressed of the participants in others studies (Baily 2011; Collins, 2009; Nobbe & Manning, 1997). The women in the current study did not express a need to choose one over the other. For example, four of the women planned to pursue their doctorate degrees despite their concerns related to balancing their family obligations while pursuing additional education. Working in a family-friendly workplace may mitigate the feeling of needing to choose between work and family.

Implications for Institutions

While the experiences of the student affairs administrators in this study were not entirely consistent, certain concrete themes stood out: 1) flexible working policies and practice are

valued, 2) proactive education for employees surrounding parental leave policies and existing campus resources for new moms can improve the transition experience of women returning to work after the birth of a child, 3) there is value to having working mothers in leadership roles, and 4) there is a need for supervisor training. This section includes a discussion of the major policies and practices institutions might consider adopting to support work-family balance for working mothers and concludes with a six specific recommendations for institutions looking to improve work-family balance for employees.

Flexible Work Policies and Practice

Workplace flexibility matters. Flexible work policies and practice were the most frequently discussed positive contributors to the work-family experience of student affairs administrators in this study. These professionals coveted the freedom and flexibility to manage their own time and accomplish their work and family tasks as needed. Those who felt they were granted that flexibility by their supervisor expressed greater workplace loyalty and satisfaction with their current work-family dynamic. Those who did not perceive workplace flexibility in relationship to their work dynamic expressed a desire to leave the institution. Additionally, when the administrators felt other employees were not granted the same level of freedom they experienced, they expressed dissatisfaction with the incongruence between espoused values and actual practice.

Institutions that are examining meaningful ways to support work-family balance of student affairs administrators should consider flexible work schedules, flexibility in work location, and accommodation for hours worked during evenings and weekends. These type of policies influence workplace culture which in turn fosters a belief that continued professional

advancement is possible for student affairs administrators who are also managing competing family responsibilities.

Proactive Education for Employees

The study participants' lack of understanding about policies surrounding maternity leave highlighted a need for a proactive approach to informing employees about policy and practice regarding FMLA and relevant institutional benefits. Human Resources could provide a guidebook for expectant parents related to campus resources and federal/state guidelines policies. For example, this could include appropriate education about time-off policies and process, including FMLA and institutional benefits such as shared leave pools. Additionally, information about navigating successful return to work, and workplace supports such as lactation accommodation on campus, could be covered as well.

Value of Working Mothers in Leadership

A significant number of the participants indicated that having other administrators who were mothers working in student affairs positively influenced institutional policy and practice. For example, several women shared their supervisors' experience as a parent influenced their supportive family-friendly approach. Conversely, when mothers were absent from policy and practice decisions, their absence had a negative effect. This was most notable for one administrator who shared that she was the only one with "young children" in her department and the two others who had children were "both middle-aged, white, males, whose wives stayed home to raise the children." Because no one else had a similar family dynamic in her department, she felt no one else related to her situation which contributed to the lack of flexibility she received from her supervisor and colleagues. Mothers in leadership roles can influence the utilization of flexible work policies, but also shape how FMLA and shared sick leave pool

policies are supported by supervisors. When the presence of mothers are lacking within an organization it is important to ensure their voice is represented when work-life supports are created and implemented. It is also imperative that steps are taken by leadership, whether or not they personally value and utilize the policy, not to inadvertently discourage use of policies or flexible work practices.

Supervisor Training

Inconsistent supervisor practice, specifically regarding flexibility in where and when employees could work, contributed to feelings of dissatisfaction for the participants in this study. This was true even when the participant's own supervisor provided flexibility when they perceived colleagues did not have that same flexibility. The two employees who expressed inflexibility from their direct supervisor shared a desire to find employment elsewhere. As a supervisor there are different ways one can support work-life policies and work-family balance of employees. Supervisors can support policies by acknowledging their existence, modeling the utilization of work-life supports, and by encouraging staff to use the benefits. Ensuring supervisor awareness of policies and procedures, training supervisors to understand how to apply policies in a manner that supports the individual and institution, and sharing how work-life supports positively impact productivity, satisfaction, and retention of employees, may improve understanding and support of such policies among supervisors.

Work-Life Supports for Institutions to Consider

There were six areas of work-life supports discussed by the women in this study as positive contributors to their work-family balance. As such, institutions looking to provide work-life supports may wish to consider these frequently discussed policies and practices as a starting point.

- 1) Workplace flexibility, whether through formalized structures or supervisor practice, promoted a feeling of trust and institutional loyalty for those who had it, and the converse for those who did not. The student affairs position requires staff to work nights and weekends and all of the women in this study accomplished work duties outside of the traditional 8:00am-5:00pm workday. In exchange for their commitment to their work and the extended work hours, institutions can provide student affairs administrators flexibility to tend to personal responsibilities during traditional working hours.
- 2) Physical wellness policies encouraged self-care among these women. Even when the women did not utilize these supports, institutional wellness practices were perceived as a favorable mechanism to support employees in a personal commitment.
- 3) Leave related to the birth or adoption of child is a valued, but misunderstood resource. Additionally, navigating the transition back to work after taking leave for that purpose can be daunting for first time parents or someone new to the benefits at that institution. Any efforts that can be taken by an institution to improve employee understanding of related policies, as well as supervisor knowledge of flexibility they have related to supporting that transition would serve employees and the institution well.
- 4) Onsite childcare was seen as an invaluable educational resource for the children of these women. If operational hours can extend into the evening or weekend, a needed resource is also provided to employees who must work during those time frames.
- 5) Policies that support the integration of family into the workplace were greatly valued by these women as an institution practice that acknowledged their roles outside of the

institution. Family integration policies were seen as particularly beneficial among administrators who chose to relocate for their position at the institution. By encouraging families to utilize campus facilities or attend athletic events by reducing or removing costs associated, the women perceived the institutions as family friendly. It also helped connect their children and spouse to the institution easing the overall transition into a new community.

- 6) Tuition remission for employees pursuing any level of degree removes a financial burden from those who wish to grow professionally through educational pursuits, as was the aspiration of many of the participants in this study. Additionally, employee education not only benefits the administrator, but the institution as well through the direct application of that knowledge through their role with the institution.

Recommendations for Student Affairs Administrators

In conducting this research, a specific effort was made to focus on the experiences of student affairs administrators working at institutions known for extensive work-life supports - generous leave time, flexible release time, financial incentives for continued education and wellness. As such, these work environments could be considered the best case scenario for a working parent managing work and family responsibilities. The women in this study who had flexibility from their supervisor to manage personal responsibilities that occurred during the workday seemed less bothered by work responsibilities that spilled over into their family time. It is possible that having the flexibility to determine how and when their work responsibilities were completed provided these mothers the support they needed to manage roles that naturally overlapped which in turn lessened the strain of managing personal and work responsibility of

student affairs administrators described by participants in other studies (Bailey, 2011; Cameron, 2011; Fochtman 2010; Spangler, 2011; Wilk, 2013).

While not all student affairs administrators are employed at institutions with work-life supports in place, there are strategies professionals can use to help support their work-family balance regardless of their current workplace. First of all, several of the policies detailed on the human resources websites of the two institutions in this study, or how those policies could be applied, were unknown to the women. Administrators who familiarize themselves with the resources available at their current institution may expand their knowledge on what work-life supports exist. Knowledge of existing supports may help facilitate a strategy to negotiating an approach to overlapping work and family responsibilities that protects the interests of the employee and institution.

When interviewing for a new position it is not enough to rely on the institutional human resources website in order to understand the mechanisms in place to support work-family balance. Individual supervisors contributed a more direct effect on the day-to-day experience managing work and family for these women regardless of institutional policy. What this means in terms of the initial interview is that in-depth conversation about workplace culture and how current team members negotiate competing responsibilities is important, even at institutions with existing policies. Although one of the participants in this study described asking such questions in her interview, there was a disconnect between how she interpreted flexible work schedules based on her prior experience and how they were practiced in the new workplace. Utilizing the interview process to ask for concrete examples of how current employees utilize work-life policies in that department may have helped her better gauge support for the use of existing

policies, as well as how those policies are interpreted and put into practice by that organizational leadership.

Student affairs administrators can also find strategies for managing competing personal and work roles by learning from the experience of their colleagues. Identifying other working mothers at their institution provided the women in this study with a network to exchange strategies and solutions related to work-family balance and helped them feel connected to other women who were committed to their careers and families. Identifying a fellow mother who is an administrator working in the same division or even at the same institution may be a particularly valuable resource to new mothers navigating their transition back after maternity leave. Not only can they help identify institutional resources such as lactation locations across campus, but they can share their experience managing things like the frequent infant routine medical appointments during the workday or evening programming when childcare is closed. Additionally, for administrators who plan to be a future parent, talking to administrators who are mothers about institutional practice regarding leave after the birth of a child may help provide insight on how such policies are applied at their current institution and how to receive the maximum benefits. This particular recommendation comes as a result of the numerous participants in the current study who did not understand that FMLA prior to having children; falsely assuming FMLA would provide them additional paid time off, above and beyond their accumulated sick and vacation time.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research

This study focused on understanding work-life balance among mothers in student affairs, as well as the impact of work-life supports on institutional culture; and consequently, career aspirations of the women. This study provided a greater understanding of the student affairs role,

how institutions can more fully support student affairs professionals and working parents. The narrowly defined demographic was a limitation of this study. Restricting the population to mid-career, student affairs professionals who were also mothers was relevant to the present study, but limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. For example, all participants in this study were heterosexual and only one of the women was unmarried at the time of this study. Focused research on single mothers, mothers in same sex relationships, or even fathers, would expand understanding of how student affairs administrators manage work and family responsibilities while working in family-friendly environments. Both institutions were also in the state of Texas and there could be regionally based values and other factors contributing to the workplace culture surrounding work and family. Additionally, the participants were not asked their race or ethnicity as it was not a focus of this study. A future study may wish to include that variable to explore similarities and differences related to race or ethnicity among student affairs administrators who are mothers.

The nature of a qualitative study helps uncover potential factors contributing to a particular phenomenon. In this case, the subject being studied was work-family balance among mothers in student affairs positions at institutions known for work-life supports. While several policies and practices were highlighted, identifying what factors are statistically contributing to work-family balance, particularly among a more diverse demographic of parents in student affairs roles, is unknown. It would be interesting to compare different populations of parents to identify the top three to four supports that institutions could implement to contribute to work-family balance for their employees who are parents. It might also be worth looking at

administrators working at different institutional types to see if that influences what supports are seen as most beneficial.

It is clear from this study that formalized work-life supports influenced the workplace culture surrounding work-family balance, which in turn influenced how these working mothers' balanced work and family. Most of the student affairs administrators in this study did not experience a workplace culture entrenched in ideal worker norms. Additionally, family-friendly supervisors contributed to the women's ability to manage their competing responsibilities which may have contributed to the professional advancement intentions of the administrators in this study. The aspiration to advance by thirteen of the participants, and the expressed desire of ten of the women to continue working at their current institution as a result of the work-family supports, reflect the positive effect family-friendly work environments may have on career trajectory among student affairs administrators balancing their work and role as mother. Further research on how family-friendly workplace cultures contribute to the professional advancement of mothers in student affairs administrator roles may better inform policy and practice decisions by institutions. For example, focusing on the work-family experiences of current CSAOs, who are also mothers, may provide insight into existing supports and barriers that contribute or detract from their professional aspirations over time would be interesting to explore. Finally, it would also be interesting to examine employee retention among student affairs administrators employed at family-friendly institutions, as the majority of women in the current study discussed their positive experience managing work and family responsibilities while employed at their current institution contributed to their desire to remain employed at that university. It could also be useful to examine employee retention in relationship to work-life supports from the perspective of the supervisor. This could provide insight into the policies more freely supported

by supervisors and the perceived benefits and drawbacks of encouraging employee use of work-life supports.

Closing Remarks

Is work-family balance possible for mothers in student affairs roles? Based on this study, the possibility exists when a workplace recognizes employees as individuals with responsibilities beyond the boundaries of the workplace and backs that up with formalized policies that help remove the need to choose between work and family and instead facilitate options to reasonably negotiate both roles. The common experience among these women was that they felt it was possible to be committed to their profession and parenthood and felt their current work-family balance was manageable. These professionals cared about their work with students, about helping them grow and develop as unique individuals. The majority felt valued within their institution and shared stories about how they contributed to the success of students and served as professional role-models and leaders to their staff. In addition, these women cared deeply about their children and other family members. They knew their co-workers' children and felt their own families were welcome on campus. For the most part, administrators at both universities expressed an institutional mantra of family-first which helped them feel valued as a professional and respected as a mother.

For these women there was no push or pull to choose between being a mom or administrator, it was about how they were going to do both. They did not hang their mom hat on the door when they walked into their office, nor their administrator hat when they came home. Instead, they kept both hats on, choosing fluidity between their roles, which was by and large institutionally supported through policies and practice. Why must a student affairs administrator, who becomes a mother, chose between being a mom and having a career? Why must women

sacrifice professional aspirations for parenthood or vice versa? These women, employed at family-friendly institutions, may have shifting priorities and timelines, but they choose to be both a student affairs administrator, with aspirations to continue to grow in their career, and a mom, who worked to be a great parent. And that is the most poignant lesson learned from this research; in a profession that aspires to develop “the whole student,” student affairs administrators should expect to be seen as more than their work responsibilities and seek employment at institutions that will support both their professional and personal commitments.

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Appendix A

Emails to Solicit Participation

Contact 1

NAME,

I am writing to ask you to consider being a participant in a research project I am conducting for my dissertation in Higher Education Administration at the University of Kansas. The project is entitled “Work-family balance among mothers who are mid-level student affairs administrators at institutions recognized for work-life policies.” I am specifically reaching out to individuals who work in the division of (Student Life/Student Services) at (Baylor University/Sam Houston State University) because of the institution’s affiliation with the *Chronicle of Higher Education’s* annual report of the *Great Colleges to Work For*.

If you would be willing to be interviewed and meet the following requirements, I would welcome your participation in the study:

- 1) You have worked at INSTITUTION for at least one year.
- 2) You are a mother of at least one child under the age of 18.
- 3) You have worked as a student affairs administrator for five or more years full-time, but are not the Chief Student Affairs Officer.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please respond by DATE. I will then contact you to schedule a one-time 60 minute interview at location of your choice at your campus. Additionally, if you know someone who might fit the target demographic at your institution, please feel free to forward this email.

Participation in Study

Participation in the study is completely voluntary and would involve a one-time 60 minute interview at a location of your choice. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any point during the study without penalty. The interview is confidential to the extent allowed by law. Although the results of this survey may be published, no study participants will be identified. All information obtained during the course of this study will remain confidential and be used to gain more knowledge on how mid-level student affairs administrators who are mothers manage their work and family responsibilities. Minimal risk is anticipated by participating in this study.

The information will be used to better understand the work-family experiences of mothers working in mid-level student affairs positions at an institution with existing work-life policies and inform future practice with regards to the structure of the student affairs position and institutional supports. If you have any questions or concerns about this study or your participation, please call me at 785-917-0192 or email me at isdell@ku.edu.

Sincerely,
Laura Isdell

Contact 2

NAME,

My name is Laura Isdell and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Educational Leadership Program at the University of Kansas. If you are a mother working in the student affairs position, I am asking you to consider participating in my study. Please review the email below for more detail, if you are interested. I will be coming to (Baylor University/Sam Houston State University) DATE to conduct interviews with some of your colleagues and would love to schedule time with you as well. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Laura Isdell

Appendix B

General Interview Guide

Thank you _____ for taking time to meet with me today. I'd like to learn more about your experiences as a student affairs administrator and mother/parent, and how those things interact and influence each other. The total interview should last about an hour, but not longer than 90 minutes. The conversation will be recorded and I will take notes, but everything that you say will remain confidential. You will select or be assigned a pseudonym that you will be referred to in any work that I produce for this research. Do you have any questions?

1. Tell me about your professional background and career path.
 - a. What led you to choose a job in student affairs?
 - b. What types of work experiences have you had within student affairs?
2. I'd like to know more about your current work role.
 - a. How would you describe your job responsibilities?
 - b. Tell me about your typical work schedule (time arrive/depart? hours worked in a week?)
 - c. How do you accomplish your work? When and where do you do so?
3. Tell me about your family (children, marital status).
 - a. Within your family dynamic, describe the responsibilities the primary caregiver assumes?
4. What other personal priorities or commitments require your attention in a typical week? (school, church, family, etc.)
5. I'm curious to know more about how you manage the work responsibilities you described with the various personal commitments you have.
 - a. How would you describe work-life balance?
 - i. According to your definition of work-life balance, do you consider yourself to have work-life balance?
 - b. What does a typical day or week look like for you?
 - c. How do your personal priorities impact your ability to manage all of your responsibilities?
 - i. What personal sources of support do you have that reduce conflict you experience between your roles?
 - ii. What personal barriers exist that contribute to conflict you experience between your roles?
 - d. How do your work priorities impact your ability to manage all of your responsibilities?
 - i. What work-related barriers exist that contribute to any conflict you experience between your roles?
 - ii. What work-related sources of support exist that reduce conflict you experience between your roles?
6. I want to talk about are the types of formal and informal mechanisms that exist at [INSTITUTION] to assist employees with managing their work and personal responsibilities.

[SHARE LIST]

- a. Tell me about any formal policies, programs, or services [INSTITUTION] offers that you have utilized to help balance your work and personal responsibilities.
 - i. Was your use of them supported by your supervisor and colleagues?
 - ii. How did the policy, program, service help you manage, or not, your work and personal commitments?
 - b. Tell me about any policies, programs, or services [INSTITUTION] offers that you know about and have not utilized.
 - i. Is use of them supported by your supervisor and colleagues?
 - ii. Do any of your colleagues use them?
 - c. What additional policies and/or practices could [INSTITUTION] implement to support your work-family balance?
7. I want to talk about the institutional culture at [INSTITUTION] surrounding work-family balance.
 - a. Tell me about any informal practices at work that you have participated in to help manage your work and personal responsibilities? An example could be having a modified work schedule, or work from home practices.
 - i. How did the informal practice help you manage, or not, your work and personal commitments?
 - ii. Was your use of them supported by your supervisor and colleagues?
 - iii. Do any of your colleagues also use them?
 - b. How would describe the culture of your department related to work-family balance?
 - c. How is that different or similar to the culture of the institution related to work-family balance?
8. Could you describe how your day-to-day experiences managing work and personal responsibilities contribute to, or detract from, your personal or professional aspirations?
 - a. How have your career responsibilities influenced decisions about your family and family goals?
 - b. How have your family responsibilities influenced decisions about your career and career goals?
 - c. How has working at [INSTITUTION] influenced your decisions about your career or family goals?